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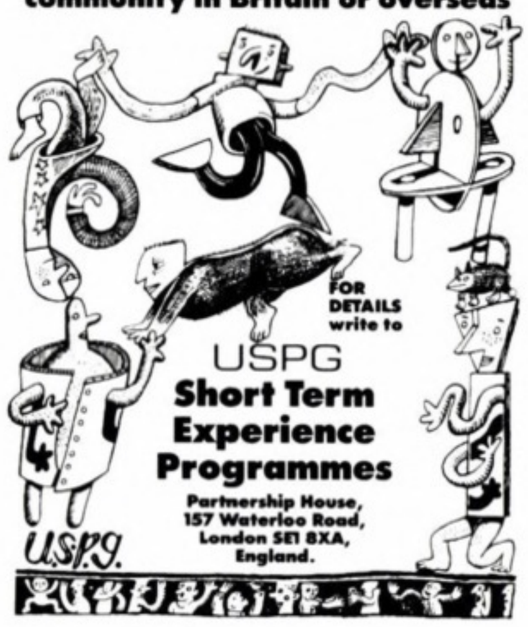

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- Which state has the most educated women– and one of the most oppressive dowry systems?

'Kerala' is the answer to all these questions.

Next month's NI takes you on a journey through this most puzzling – and beautiful – of Third World states in an issue that marks both our move to full colour and the 20th birthday of New Internationalist Magazine.

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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH: ON THE AFGHAN BORDER. A YOUNG GIRL IN A REFUGEE CAMP, PAKISTAN.
STEVE McCURRY / MAGNUM

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Girls

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

'THANK heaven for leettle girls,' lilted Maurice Chevalier in a popular film of my girlhood. You won't find that kind of sentiment here. So changed are attitudes since those antediluvian times that any film today with an ageing gallant making suggestive comments about little girls would show him as a villain.

When I started this issue, its working title was 'the girl child', and all the material which had been collected both by me and by **NI** (I am a guest) was about girls in the South. This was not surprising, because it was as a gender and development issue that the topic had been selected.

But as I began to talk to people – researchers, equal opportunities officers, teachers, women activists and academics – here in the North, I found that the phrase 'the girl child' elicited incomprehension. It began to sound silly to me, too. Why 'the girl child'? Why not simply 'girls'? It seemed that, in the way that sometimes happens surreptitiously, 'the girl child' carried restrictive connotations. We were in danger of doing something I much dislike, viewing the South through a different lens from the one we train on our own society. It wasn't as if no-one was looking at girlhood in the North – far from it. And while many forms of girl discrimination do have cultural and poverty connections, others don't. Look for son preference and you'll find it anywhere on earth.

So I dropped 'the girl child' and the subject of the magazine became 'girls'. But this produced its own problems. It could easily sound frivolous. And when I came across male researchers who expressed great interest in the subject, I found it hard not to wonder: 'paedophile'?

We had trouble, too, with the cover. If a girl is showing verve, assertiveness, mischief – her spice rather than her sugar – then the picture can often be seen as a sexual come-on whatever her innocence. The words aren't easy either. Our theme is that girls are invisible and that this must change. But try to use any word which demands that we 'look' at girls, and there's innuendo. Worse innuendo, it seems, for girls than for women. When I did an **NI** on women back in 1977, I called my keynote 'Waking up to Women' and no-one had a problem. Is it just that we're much more politically correct nowadays? Why, I keep asking myself, are 'girls' so difficult?

So all the time I've been putting the magazine together I've been puzzling over this problem. I suppose 'girls', with its easy elision into 'gels' or 'girlies', has a way to go before it can sound like something to do with gender rather than sex or giggles. Maybe the vulnerability of girls makes them – paradoxically – easy to ridicule. A kind of shame about this makes us extra sensitive about how we portray them.

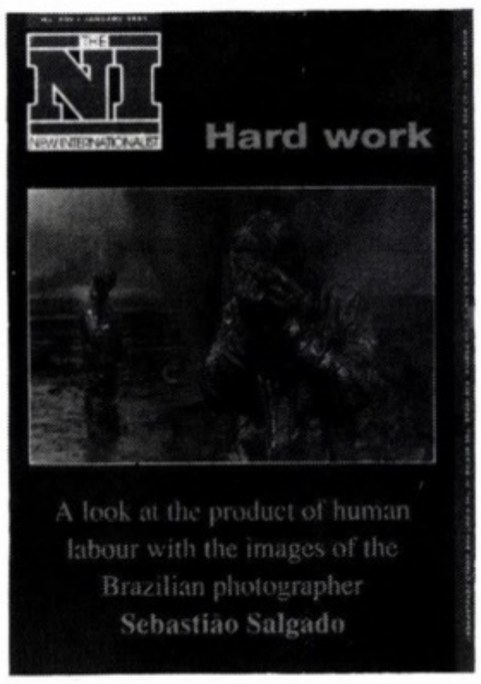
I think that's the answer. I'll probably change my mind next week. In the meantime it's been a pleasure – and a challenge – to produce this issue of the **NI**, and it's time it went to bed.

Maggie Black
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Lookalike

Pictures of work (*Hard Work* **NI 239**) may have been neglected but the photographs you give us don't completely fill the gap.

If people come to look like what they produce, why don't we get to see what Salgado looks like himself? I don't



expect him to resemble a photograph in some way, any more than the woman in Barcelona that Eduardo Galeano talks about really looked like a chicken. But he does tell us that his pictures look like his life rather than *vice versa*. This suggests a one-way process – that although the work he photographs is 'hard', the photographs he takes of it express his own (romantic?) view of it.

What I end up with is a strong response to Salgado's genius as a photographer rather than an insight into the much less pleasant world of hard work. I only wish I could agree with him that manual labour is dying out – and there will be no more pictures like his to be taken in future.

Francine Sedley
Toronto, Canada

Normal paranormal

Your brave attempt to put the paranormal into the conceptual frame of the **NI** reader (*Magical Mystery Tour* **NI 237**) was splendidly balanced, helpfully informative and reasonably sane. But what it *didn't* address – unless I missed it – was *why* the paranormal exists.

Every culture in the world, every folklore, is rich in stories of otherworldly encounters. Why? Not because the visionaries are hysterical or mentally ill (though of course they sometimes are) but because seeing a vision or talking to a god is the appropriate solution for the individual's need at that particular moment.

What Debbie Taylor experienced in Africa, what Richard Broughton finds in his lab, is the human mind bursting through its conventional barriers. This is why I profoundly disagree with Sue Blackmore when she tries to convince us that 'hunting for the paranormal is not the way to understand the human mind'. For a great many of the cultures in whose condition **NI** is interested, what we would call 'paranormal' is everyday normal.

Hilary Evans
London UK

VIV QUILLIN

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

UNICEF riposte

I am replying to the generalized, and unsubstantiated attack on the work of UNICEF in Sudan (*Letters* **NI 236**).

Mr Byng clearly has little experience of bureaucracies. UNICEF is widely praised for its decentralized structure – 83 per cent of its staff and 87 per cent of its expenditures are in field locations – for its management-by-objectives approach and for reaching low-cost goals in primary health care, water, sanitation, nutrition and education. UNICEF is also praised for its advocacy on the rights of the child, in achieving global political commitments to children and in the promotion of breastfeeding. Responding to a range of humanitarian crises has cost the lives of four of our international staff this year alone, two of them only recently in southern Sudan.

The voicing of individual grudges is surely out of place in the pages of **NI**.

Robert D Smith
UNICEF UK, London

Cool comfort

What a pity it was that your correspondents (**NI 237**) were so incensed with Anuradha Vittachi's suggestion that the apparently high consumption by the better classes of people might be unreasonable (*Sex, lies and global survival* **NI 235**). They missed their opportunity to defend their dominance.

Perhaps all their chill warnings of overpopulation did was to cool and comfort those of us who live near the Equator without air conditioning, and thereby encourage us in our profligate ways. How easy it would have been for them to explain that what they have and what they use is their right. And anyway, there ought to be some compensation for living in the UK at this time of year.

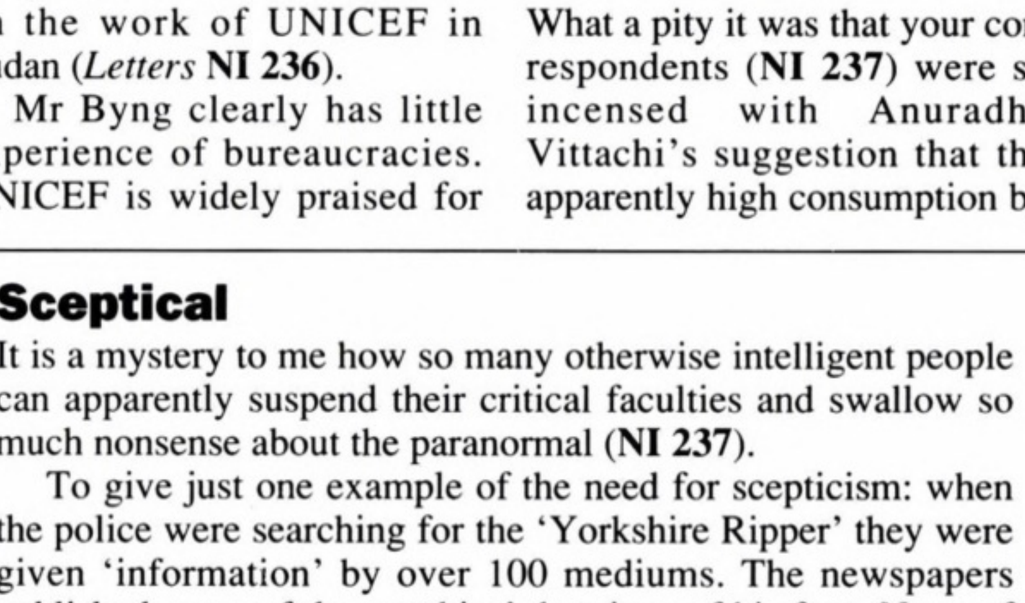
Nevell Hungerford
East Awin Refugee Camp
Kiunga, Papua New Guinea

Sceptical

It is a mystery to me how so many otherwise intelligent people can apparently suspend their critical faculties and swallow so much nonsense about the paranormal (**NI 237**).

To give just one example of the need for scepticism: when the police were searching for the 'Yorkshire Ripper' they were given 'information' by over 100 mediums. The newspapers published some of the psychics' drawings of his face. None of the drawings resembled the man. What is important, however, is not that they got it wrong: it is, from the psychologist's point of view, how easily we *forget* that they were wrong. If just one of the pictures had been close it would have been proclaimed by the clairvoyants as evidence for their case. Similarly, we tend to remember only those dreams which come true.

David Simmonds
London, UK



Apology

The map of Israel in the January 1993 issue incorrectly showed the Gaza strip appended to Sinai, and Sinai itself as part of the Occupied Territories. It reverted to Egypt in 1982 after the signing of a peace treaty three years earlier. We apologize for this error, and for the misspelling of Jordan. Responsibility for these errors rests entirely with the NI and not with the author of the piece.

Mothers' apartheid

I find it worrying that Commonground equate breastfeeding with sex (*Letters* **NI 238**). Campaigners have worked long and hard to encourage women in both North and South to breastfeed their babies. However, a lot of women don't breastfeed out of embarrassment or shame – it is seen as sexual and therefore unacceptable behaviour. This means that they either capitulate and bottle-feed or suffer a sort of breastfeeding mothers' apartheid, unable to take part in life outside the home for fear of having to feed their child in front of other people.

I thought the front cover referred to (**NI 235**) was excellent. It shouldn't be breastfeeding mums who are hidden from view but those people who have difficulty treating them as normal members of society. With breastfeeding, as with many other things, a few more posi-

tive images can do nothing but good.

J Smith
Nottingham, UK

Off target

Thanks for the issue on population (**NI 235**). I read it all through wondering when Anuradha Vittachi was going to reach population. She never did. There was nothing about how women in the South actually want fewer children than their mothers had; or about the appalling lack of maternal and child health care or family planning services in many countries; or about the health benefits of family planning, or successful (and voluntary) programmes all over the world. In fact there was nothing much about the South at all.

According to their reports to the UNCED secretariat for the Earth Summit, most countries think that population issues are important for the future of the environment. They have a fairly balanced view – they don't think rapid population growth is the root of all evil, but they don't dismiss it as irrelevant. If you were President of a country where the population had doubled in the last 25 years and might double again in the next 25, you wouldn't dismiss it either.

Alex Marshall
UNFPA, New York

Popular poison

In response to the article 'Dirty surf' (*Saving the sea* **NI 234**) I am appalled by the sewage problem and the way it's being handled throughout Australia. Beachgoers: what kind of government would not take the precautions necessary to warn of the dangers and risks of swimming in highly polluted areas? Bondi beach in Sydney is one of the most popular (topless) tourist beaches of Australia. It is also one of the most polluted. When I visited this beach last year not once did I see a warning sign! I only saw hundreds of happy surfers who had no idea that they were swimming their way to toxic poisoning.

Nicole Sumner
Victoria ,Canada

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

LETTER *from* **LAHORE**

The long march

Maria del Nevo records an extraordinary – and ultimately fruitless – day in the life of political opposition in Pakistan.

Two days before the opposition alliance's Long March to Islamabad, led by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, thousands of political leaders and workers belonging to the Pakistan People's Party were arrested. Across the country, from Punjab to the North West Frontier Province, roads were blocked, a bridge was blown up near Sukkar, people were stopped at airports and railway stations. Islamabad, swarming with police squads and army trucks, became an inaccessible island.

The Government accused the opposition of attempting to destabilize it by holding a massive demonstration outside Parliament House, inviting a violent response and the imposition of martial law. Nevertheless people from all four provinces seemed willing to overcome any obstacle to join the Long March.

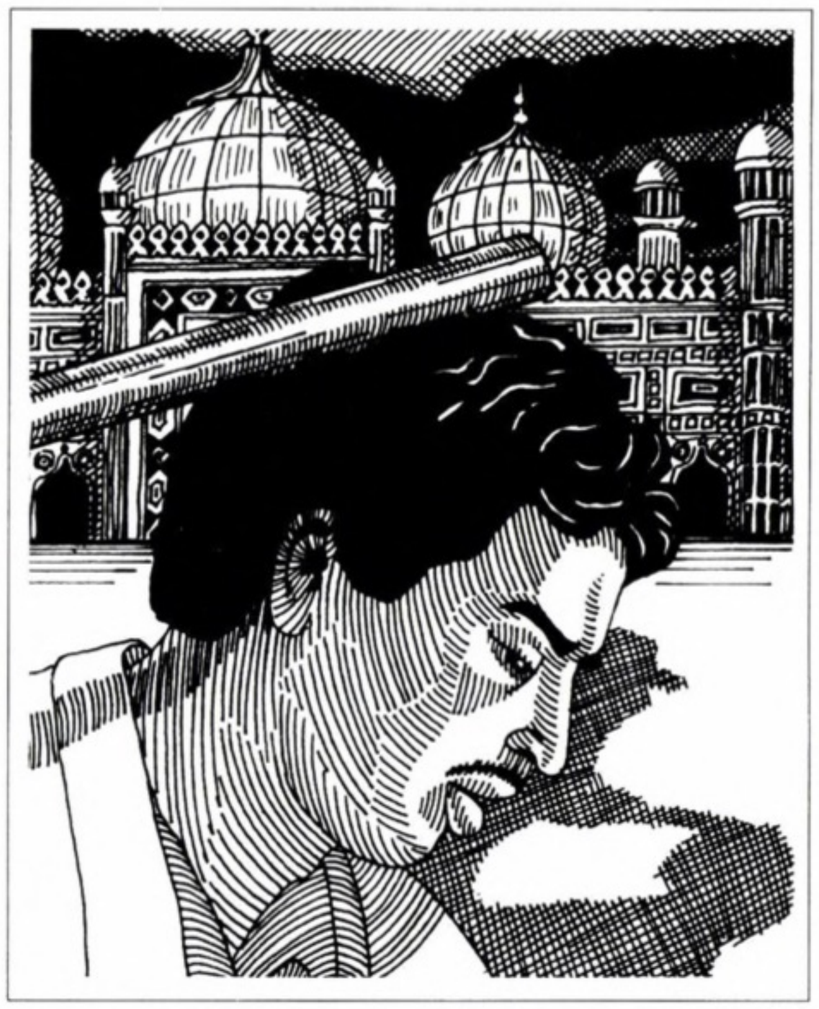


ILLUSTRATION : MIRIAM MCCURDY

Lahore marchers met up at dawn at the Bhatti chowk (roundabout) just outside the old walled city. We gathered in the offices of our newspaper the *Frontier Post*,later that morning in an atmosphere of anticipation. Ejaz Haider Bukhari, the deputy editor of our features section, had gone to Bhatti chowk. So had Rahat Dar, our features photographer, and a team of reporters.

We waited for news. Hours went by. It was unlikely that the Lahore marchers would ever get out of the city. All we learned was that the city around us had come to a virtual standstill. Every hour or so we received worried telephone calls from Ejaz's wife.

'Any word?'

'No,' we replied.

Ejaz didn't return until mid-afternoon. Breathless, his face swollen and his eyes streaming, he told us of the terrible violence he had witnessed.

'Thousands came,' he said, 'but by the time I reached there at seven o'clock there were already clashes between police and crowds. We ran here and there but couldn't escape the tear gas or the police batons. They charged again and again. They beat women and children, anyone who got in their way. They pulled down people from buses and beat them as they lay on the streets. Skulls were opened, blood flowed... Then the marchers got a policeman. They tore his clothes away until he lay naked in the street. A large group standing over him, they kicked him over and over. They beat him to pulp.'

He told us that somewhere en route Benazir's jeep had been stopped and she had been injured. We waited for further news. We crowded around the television. 'There are unconfirmed reports that Benazir has been arrested,' the BBC informed us. We hung on. Gradually reporters returned to the office and began filing stories on the terrible violence they had seen.

At about five in the evening the news editor came up to the features section where Ejaz was frantically filing his stories and told us that Benazir had reached Parliament House. There was a sudden cry, both of surprise and of victory.

'It's impossible,' retorted Ejaz. 'She was spotted on the Murree Road heading towards Liaquat Bagh.'

He was right. Half an hour later our photographer, Rahat Dar, telephoned from Liaquat Bagh, where the marchers were to meet and progress to Parliament House. Benazir had reached there and addressed an audience of some 50,000 people. She had been dodging police all the way, going from house to house, from jeep to jeep, and finally had taken a lift from our photographer, who sounded extremely pleased with himself.

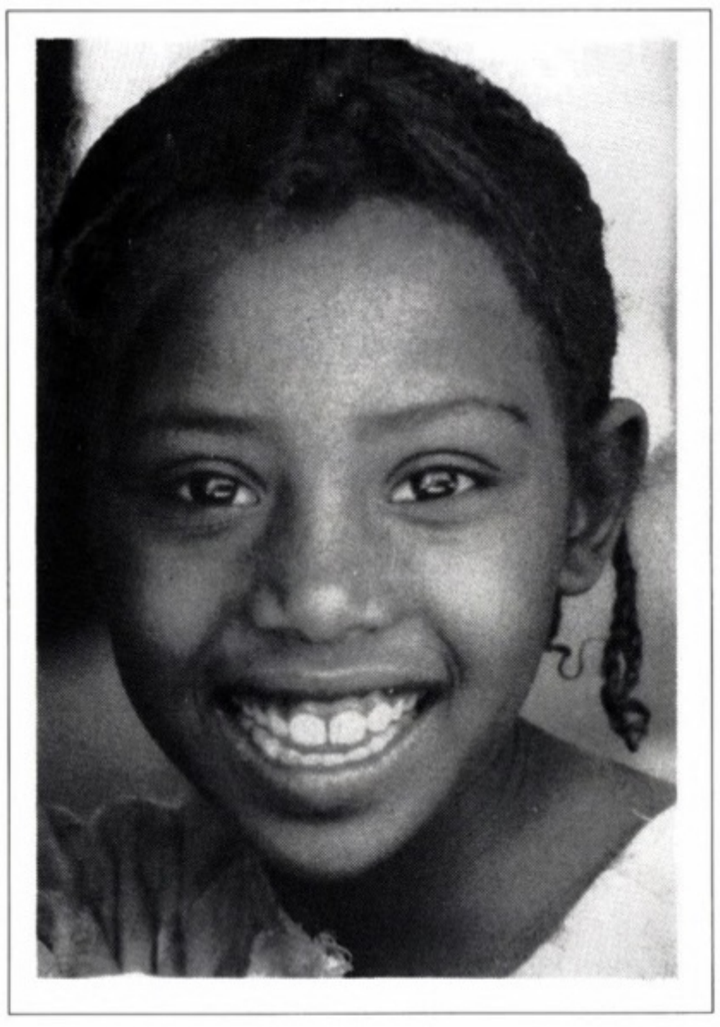
'Every day will be a Long March day,' announced Benazir at Liaquat Bagh, before she was finally arrested.

Her arrest was confirmed by our newsroom only a few minutes later. Everyone was hit by the feeling of anti-climax. In the end nothing had been achieved. The opposition leader had not reached Parliament House in Islamabad – and neither had anyone else. All that remains is the debris left by nationwide violence. ■

Maria del Nevo is a former **NI** staff member who now lives and works in Lahore.

Girls and girlhood

Time we were noticed



ROGER LEMOYNE / UNICEF

Girls don't exist – or so the experts would have us believe. ***Maggie Black*** *puts girls centre stage and urges us to jettison our gender blinkers.*

FROM pink or blue babywear, through Barbie dolls or football heroes, to fetching water or herding goats, a girl's life and a boy's life are different – wherever they are in the world.

Girls and boys are treated differently, behave differently, and tend to have different likes and dislikes. People may argue over whether the reasons are biological or stem entirely from social conditioning – but one thing is sure, there is a difference.

We are keenly aware of the gender of our children or of those close to us. We may try to avoid stereotypes of what boys are like and girls are like. But androgyny – even in the very young – confuses us. We like to know someone's gender as one of the fundamentals about them which helps us to communicate, to relate.

So why, when it comes to the professional observation of society, are girls and girlhood almost entirely invisible?

The world divides the human race into three species: men, women and children. Within the last category the experts rarely differentiate by sex, designating 'children' only by age – and being gloriously inconsistent even about that. In the Middle Ages childhood was deemed to be over by the age of eight, and in some corners of the world today one might protest it never begins.

According to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, 18 is the outer limit of childhood; yet in many societies, children – especially girl children – are treated as adults in all socially and sexually signif-

SEAN SPRAGUE / PANOS

A ring a ring of roses: schoolgirls in a Nairobi playground hoping to turn the future around.

icant ways once they have passed puberty.

The window of expertise on childhood, from Freud to Piaget and Dr Spock, has been largely designed by those interested in physical, cognitive and emotional development at different ages. When it comes to programmes for children, the professionals concentrate on maternal and child health care, social and educational services.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child makes the point – which most of us would take for granted – that girls and boys have equal rights. But the reality is that in almost every society, girls suffer discrimination in almost every context. Not only do some girls suffer from certain gross abuses of rights – female infanticide and trafficking in parts of Asia or genital mutilation in parts of Africa – but in a petty, repetitive way they are consistently shortchanged. In matters of nurture, play, schooling, leisure time, classroom attention, parental investment, girls are typically disadvantaged compared to boys.

This discovery, when stated, seems so obvious that it is hard to see why it has gone almost unremarked – except when one recalls that discrimination against women used to be so ingrained that it was routinely taken for granted. The situation of girls has, similarly, been invisible because the gender perspective has been left out of the analysis of childhood.

While experts on child psychology, child health, child development, child abuse, child nutrition, child rights, have been extremely active in the past few decades, little of the information they have collected and published is more than superficially gender-conscious.

Discrimination begins early

So what do we know about girl children as opposed to boy children? Let us start at the beginning – with birth. For every 100 girl babies, 105 boys are born. An inbuilt male superiority from day one? No. At all ages in life, including in the womb, the female has a higher survival rate. So nature redresses the balance by providing an extra crop of boys whose chance of system failure around birth is higher than that of girls. Soon after this, the number of girls should outstrip that of boys – unless human interference comes into play.

Such human interference does take place – in some quite extreme forms – in parts of the world where males are valued more highly than females. Until the modern era, preference for sons was virtually universal in every society. It lingers most deeply in those parts of Asia, Northern Africa and the Middle East where women have no role in agricultural or economic production.

This is translated into cultural prejudice which reinforces the desire for – and position accorded to – sons. Even radical social change may not alter things deep down. Male-female equality was a fixed tenet of the Chinese Revolution. Yet when China introduced the one-child policy in 1979, sons were still so much more highly valued that cases of female infanticide began to occur. The authorities had to relax the rule to allow those who bore daughters 'a second chance'.

Female infanticide also continues to be reported in parts of India and Pakistan. And more notorious still has been the use of amniocentesis tests to discover the sex of

the child in the womb and have an abortion if the foetus is female. The outrage against such practices among women activists in India and other parts of Asia led to an 'Asian Year of the Girl Child' in 1990.

Much more significant in terms of numbers is the neglect suffered by surviving baby girls. Not until 1986 did the World Health Organization (WHO) set out to compare infant and young child mortality rates by gender. The exercise showed that in South Asia, in the Middle East and in Latin America, girls were less well fed, less likely to be taken to the clinic if sick and more likely to die from childhood disease than boys. This was in spite of their greater biological durability.

Since then more information has been collected about the comparative well-being of girls and boys from infancy onwards, mostly at the initiative of UNICEF. However, the mentality which for so long failed to pose the gender question about young children is only partially reformed. Still today, UNICEF annually publishes all its child survival and child health data without male-female division.

Is this because the data does not exist – because malnutrition cases identified in child-weighing clinics are counted up without breakdown by sex? Does the same apply to doses dispensed of antibiotics, oral rehydration solution, malaria prophylactics, and vaccination jabs? If so, why? And if the perception – or data – is not there for health, nor is it there in other areas. Do studies on the impact of world recession on children mention comparative impacts on boys and girls? Not often. Apparently, as used to be the case with women, gender in childhood is an extra question – not a question integral to every issue.

After the age of five, child health is much less at risk. But other risks take over as both boys and girls take on essential household tasks. In the countryside, they help around the home, boys doing the herding and bird-scaring, girls doing household chores. In the town, mothers and boys go out to earn while girls are left to mind the baby. There are clear gender divisions. Yet analysts of the pre-school child often describe their subjects as miraculously genderless. In the rare cases where data exists, it turns out that girls invariably spend more daily hours than boys on household work.

Invisible workers

The same applies when it comes to the kind of work children do to earn money. The two types of lens used to scrutinize child labour are 'children in the workplace' and 'children on the streets'. And – surprise, surprise – in both cases the territory of work is defined by boys and occupied by boys. There are some girls, yes. But girls are not usually sent out to earn, so many have run away from home. Most occupations belong to boys. Paper-gluing girls, taxi-fare girls, metalworker girls are virtually non-existent. With a few exceptions, boys get the higher status work and better pay. Thus girls, like women, are relegated to the most marginal work – flower-selling, rag-sorting – with the least pickings.

Also invisible are the girls whose life is spent minding house and infants so that mothers and brothers as well as fathers can go out and earn. And a vast number of girl children are in domestic service outside their own homes. In India alone there are said to be 100 million child servants. In Haiti five per cent of those aged 5-18, or 109,000 children, mainly girls, are given by impoverished parents to affluent homes where they work round the clock for nothing. These *restaveks* (from *reste avec*) are terribly exploited, but millions of others are in a similar position.

Sexual abuse of girl domestics is commonplace – and if discovered often leads to dismissal, the streets and prostitution.

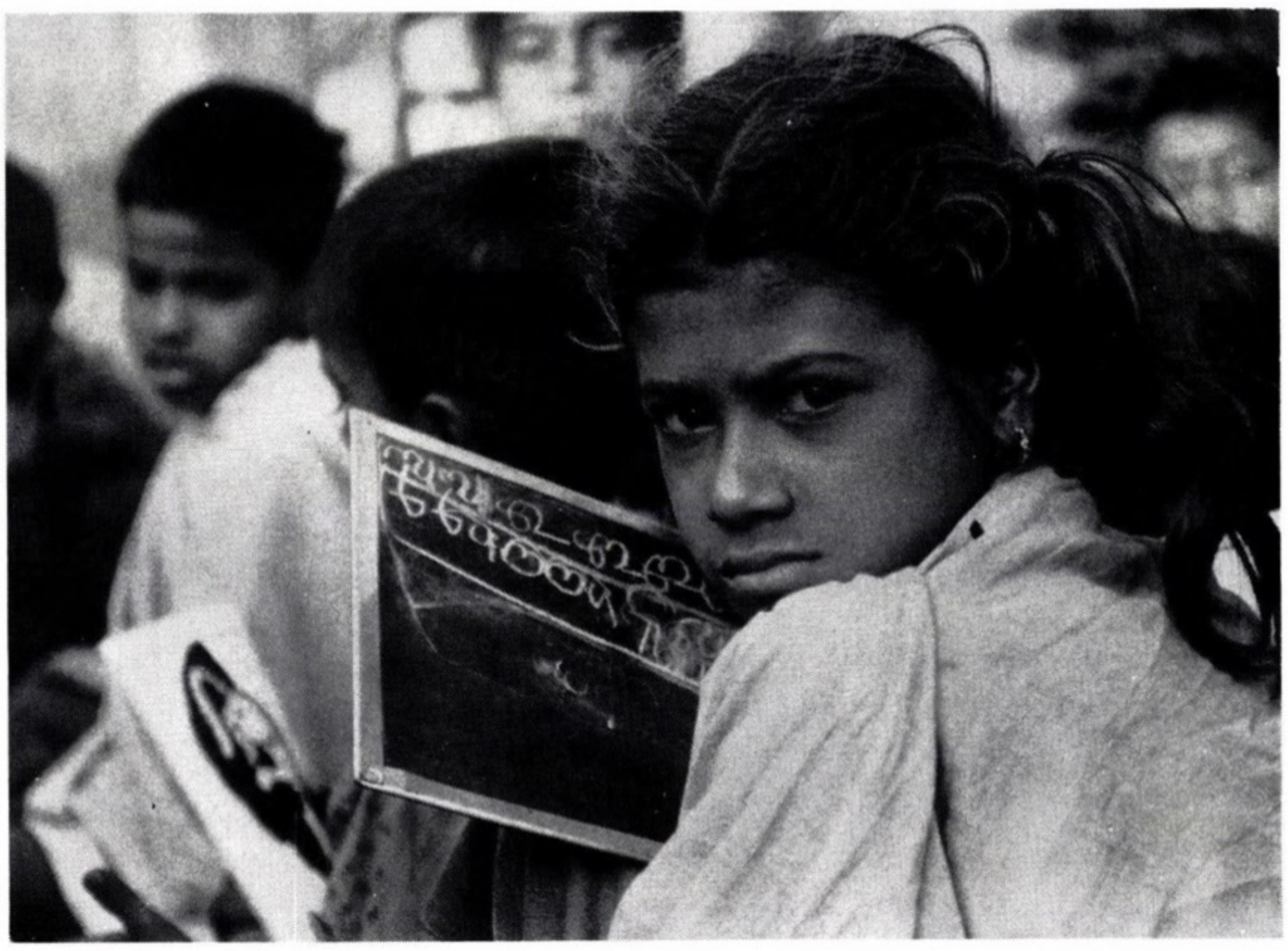
The figures on the trafficking of young girls in the sex trade are horrifying but hard to pin down: one million worldwide is quoted. Ages quoted are most shocking of all. An operation by the US Navy Investigation Bureau in Olongapo City, Philippines, found four-year-olds being sold for sex to US sailors. Reliable reports describe the sale of seven-year-old Burmese girls into sex slavery in Thailand's brothels. The threat of AIDS has worsened their vulnerability: the younger the girl, the less likely she is to carry HIV – though she is not less likely to contract it. Some belief systems actually hold that sex with a young virgin will free a man of sexually-transmitted disease. Cases of Asian girl babies with syphilis are not unheard of.

In the rich world we may shudder and congratulate ourselves that this kind of exploitation is largely a thing of the past. But right inside the domestic hearth we find more invidious abuse, long stifled by taboo: incest. Figures vary depending on what is a 'child', what is 'abuse', and whether the fondlings of a stepfather constitute 'incest'. When 'abuse' includes everything from petting to penetration and rape, one in four pre-pubescent girls in North America and Europe are thought to have been abused – twice the number of boys. There are no figures for developing countries but runaway girls often cite sexual abuse as a reason for leaving home.

Here, though, we may be surprised that the proportion of boys is not smaller. So attuned are we to the assumption that girls are the most frequent victims that we may be engaged in reverse discrimination. And do we know about the comparative impact of abuse on boys and girls? Hardly at all – because the questions are rarely asked.

The one area where we do have good gender information is in education. This is because the school is the place in which a country's productive human resource is being shaped and its output is economically significant. Much has been written about the developing world's 'educational gender gap'. The 1990 World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand,

Girls do as well as boys in school – as long as they get to go, and stay, there.



VILAS / UNICEF

made a great fuss about bringing girls into school. Some progress – new funds, new projects – is being made. The disappointing aspect is that the case made for educating girls almost always concerns their future as mothers: educated women means fewer babies and healthier children, so the argument goes. Their rights and opportunities as girls or as prospective adults in a non-mothering context are rarely cited by the female education enthusiasts.

In the Western world, the educational battleground over gender has shifted with the advent of universal schooling. In classrooms in UK and North America, studies find that in mixed schools, the standards of excellence being applied are often heavily male-biased, and that the rowdier, more demanding boys manage to gain the lion's share of teacher's attention. Girls seem to do better academically in single-sex schools where a girl's universe is never limited by a boy's 'superior' claim. The Girl Guides Associations around the world stoutly maintain that the absence of boys asserting themselves around the camp-fire, on the cliff-face, in the canoe, gives girls a freer environment in which to develop self-esteem and confidence.

As she grows up the schoolgirl becomes the adolescent – a girl-woman. But she is still a child according to legal convention, which ignores menarche as the passage to adulthood. This is absurd in any society, more so in some. In devout Muslim families from Bahrain to Bangladesh it is normal to marry off a daughter once she has menstruated. And a married girl is a woman: in many languages it is difficult even to say 'married girl' because the words imply 'married virgin'.

Some countries are making an effort to raise the legal marriage age. But the giving of Asian girls to men two and three times their age is still commonplace. And girl marriage is not mentioned in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, even though in the many cases where the girl's consent was neither sought nor given, it qualifies as slavery according to the international convention on contemporary forms of servitude.

BRENDA PRINCE / FORMAT

Doing away with gender stereotypes: 'taster day' in building skills, Hackney, UK.

Pregnant children

Statistics on teenage marriages and pregnancies belong in the 'maternity' category. By some ageist osmosis, motherhood even in a 12-year-old is a woman's issue. Who talks of children having babies? Yet pregnancy before age 15 is extremely risky: 25 per cent of the world's maternal deaths are among teenagers.

On the verge of adulthood, we still omit the obvious need for gender awareness: teenagers, adolescents, youth – the words are all genderless. Yet the passage into adulthood is very different for the two sexes in every way: timing, physical and psychological change, and social implications. A US report on the invisibility of girls in educational analysis states that early adolescence is particularly difficult for girls: 'Moving from "young girl" to "young woman" involves meeting unique demands in a culture that both idealizes and exploits the sexuality of young women while assigning them roles that are clearly less valued than male roles'. Correspondingly, they suffer loss of self-esteem: among white high-school students, only 29 per cent of girls are 'happy the way I am', compared to 46 per cent of boys.

In recent years research has confirmed the view expressed exactly two centuries ago by Mary Wollstonecraft that social rather than biological factors fix girls in 'feminine' and boys in 'masculine' roles. The effect on the modern women's movement and parenting ideas has been profound. If women's persistent sense of inferiority to men is instilled around the potty stage, they argue, then efforts must start at the earliest moment to avoid repeating unhelpful stereotypes about male and female roles and behaviours. Girls must witness Mummy mending the car; boys must see Daddy crying into the washing-up. Girls as young as two must own their bodies: no kisses for grannie on demand. Stories and nursery rhymes have been reconstructed: Little Red Riding Hood kills the wolf; the Princess slays the dragon; girls join football teams and boys take up knitting and embroidery.

Some of this effort to mix up roles goes so far as to imply that we should forget about gender. Quite the opposite is needed. We must notice where prejudices based on gender are operating – especially when hidden. Commentators have recently begun to point out that the culture of childhood and the culture of youth – because girls are so unnoticed – are essentially male. Judgments about 'success' are usually based on male performance criteria, whether we are talking about the weight of the baby or leadership capacity in the sixth form. Efforts to submerge gender may end up by supporting the status quo, leaving patriarchal values intact. And they are bound to reinforce the invisibility of girls and girlhood. They deny an independent girl reality and conflict with the need to be more gender-conscious, not less, in the ways society observes and describes the experiences of childhood.

Girls are not just women-to-be. They have rights of their own. In Amsterdam in 1992, the first international conference on girlhood was convened by a group of women academics who felt that the time has come to consider whether girls' studies should be launched as a sub-set of women's studies. Representatives from both North and South were there. They called their conference *Alice in Wonderland*. Let us hope that Alice is left to languish in Wonderland no longer, that this event is a sign that she is about to burst through the looking-glass and shed her invisibility for ever. ■

EVA the INCREDIBLE INVISIBLE GIRL

"Children may be seen & not heard..."

...& girl children aren't seen or heard!

...OUR CHILDREN ARE THE NATION'S MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE! OUR CHILDREN NEED GOOD CARE, HEALTH & PREPARATION FOR THEIR FUTURE ROLES AS WORKERS & CITIZENS...

He's talking about me?!

- Or my brothers!

SEND YOUR DAUGHTER TO SCHOOL! WITHOUT EDUCATION, NO RESPECTABLE MAN WILL MARRY HER - BESIDES, SHE'LL BE A BETTER MOTHER - HEALTHIER CHILDREN - & SHE'LL IMPRESS HER IN-LAWS...

2+2

Is that it?! - I want to be a Cabinet Minister!

WOMENS DAY

EQUAL PAY, RIGHTS & OPPORTUNITIES!

DOWN WITH THE PATRIARCHY! EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN...

Paper... paper...? & equal rights for girls!

NEWS

I want to be seen, & I want to be heard!

KC

GIRLS AREN'T JUST WOMEN - IN-WAITING, SO - LOOK OUT!

ILLUSTRATION: KATE CHARLESWORTH

The unwanted sex

Abortion. Infanticide. Preference for sons leads to the destruction of baby girls. ***Sakuntala Narasimhan*** *explains why it happens in India – and what women are doing about it.*

SUE DARLOW / FORMAT

The girl child on duty: outside the classroom itching to get in.

WHEN Vithal, a Bombay shop assistant, returned from the hospital where his wife Ratna had given birth, his mother did not need to ask: 'boy or girl?'. One look at his long face and empty hands and she knew. Had it been a boy Vithal would have bought a box of sweet *peda* to share with friends and relatives.

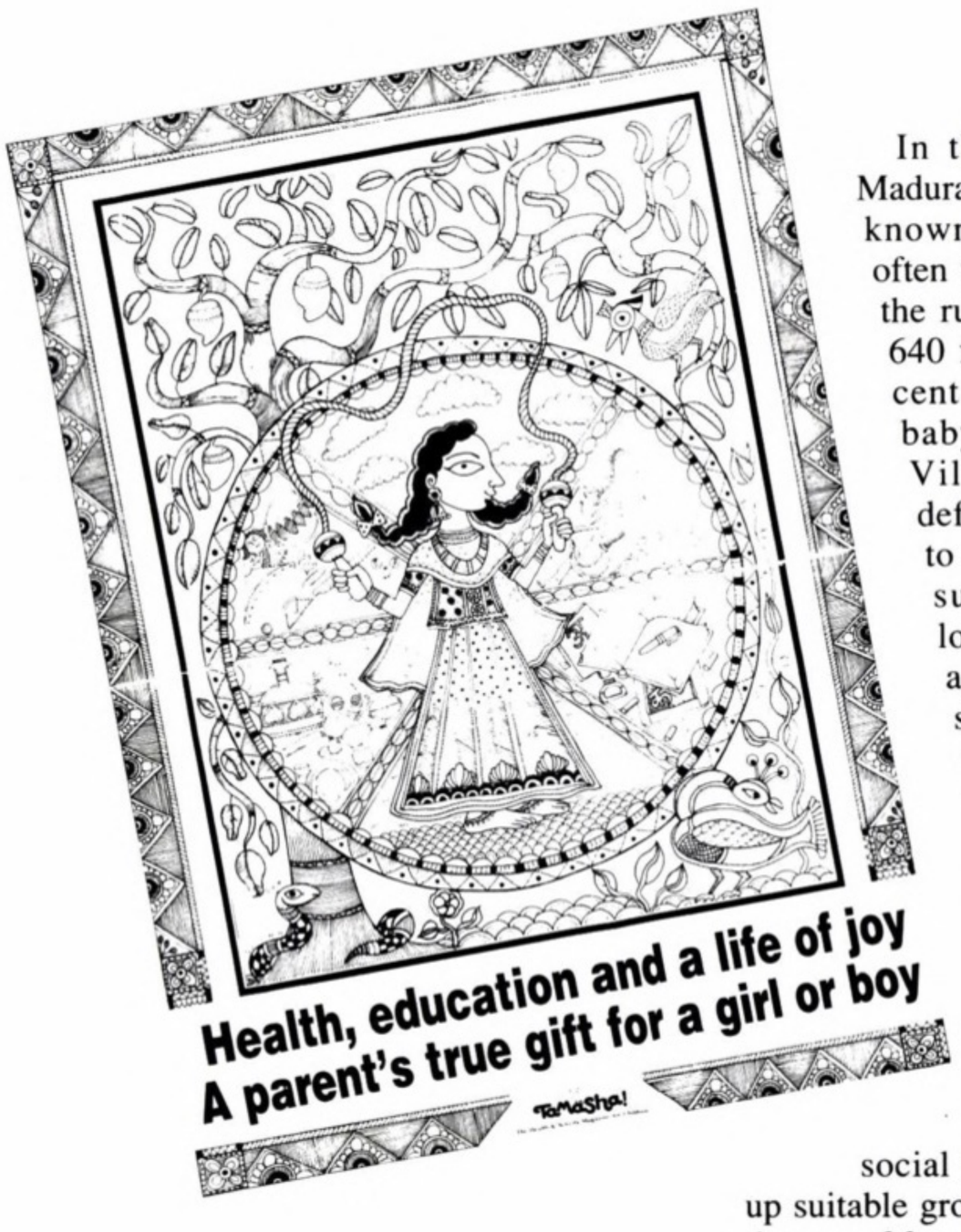
They named the baby Leela, but the naming ceremony was a very simple affair. Two years earlier at the naming of their son Raja there had been an elaborate feast for 50 guests and a thanksgiving at the temple.

When Raja started school at the age of six, Leela loved his uniform and new satchel and clamoured to be sent too. Her grandmother told her: 'Eh, you're a girl, why would you need schooling? Girls stay home and help their mothers so that they can be good wives when they marry.' To divert her, they put a toy rolling pin and a tiny plastic bowl in her hands. 'Let's see how good you are at rolling *chapatis*!'

Leela played at mixing dough and feeding it to her doll. But make-believe soon turned to reality when her mother began work as a domestic help to eke out family finances. A new son had been born, and Leela – aged seven – was left to mind the infant during the day.

By age eight she was fetching water from the community tap to fill the drum at home. By age nine she was sweeping the floor each morning and learning to cook. Now, at 12, she does most of the cooking and housekeeping because her grandmother is no longer around and her mother Ratna is working extra hours to help put Raja through high school.

Ratna protests when I point out the difference in her treatment of son and daughter. 'It is not that I do not love Leela. But my son has to earn, so education is important for him. He will support us in old age.' Leela will be given in marriage – a heavy cost to Vithal and Ratna – and will 'belong' thereafter to her husband's family.



Poster by *Tamasha*, a children's magazine, for the 'Year of the Girl Child'.

'We will have no claim on her once she is married and goes away.'

This, then, is the pervasive cultural perception: daughters are *paraya dhan*, another's property. Sons have economic value, perpetuate the family name and perform religious rites for the ancestors' souls after death – rites which girls cannot perform. 'May you be blessed with eight sons' is often intoned by elders when a girl prostrates at their feet on ceremonial occasions.

With son preference so strong, girls are unwelcome, a burden. This is reinforced by the system of arranged marriage – still the norm – and dowry, which maintains a strong hold in spite of its legal prohibition since 1961. The spread of consumerism means that the savings of a lifetime can be wiped off by a daughter's wedding. The more attractive the man as a prospective groom, the greater the demands made by his family. The result: heavy debts. And keeping a daughter unmarried is considered sinful and socially unacceptable.

India's skewed sex ratio is itself an index of anti-female discrimination. The number of women per 1,000 males in the population has fallen steadily this century, from 972 in 1900 to 933 in 1981. The 1980s saw increases in two dreadful manifestations of social prejudice against girls: female infanticide, and the use of tests on the unborn (amniocentesis) to determine sex and abort the female foetus.

In the Kallar community in Madurai, southern India, it became known that newborn girls were often fed poison berries to escape the ruinous effects of dowry. Of 640 families questioned, 51 per cent admitted to killing a girl baby within a week of birth. Villagers were reported as defending the custom: 'Better to snuff a life at birth than to suffer lifelong misery.' A local woman medical doctor agreed. 'These mothers have suffered so much, they don't want the pattern repeated in their own lives.'

Stories of baby girls smothered with a pillow at birth come from Rajasthan, where again the problem of dowry is severe. Rajputs will not marry their daughters to families lower in the social hierarchy. In order to snap up suitable grooms, girls can be married at the age of four or five.

Amniocentesis tests are intended for checking congenital abnormalities in the foetus. But in India, this modern technique has been hijacked to serve conventional prejudice. Abortion is legal, so many families are using the test to find out the sex of the child and then abort a girl. The survey most often quoted comes from a clinic in Bombay, where of 8,000 abortions in the late 1980s, 7,999 were of female foetuses.

One Indian Government Minister declared himself in favour of the practice, on the grounds that it would 'improve the status of women by reducing the number of women, thereby making them more sought after'. But following widespread protests by women activists and organizations, the State of Maharashtra (which includes Bombay) passed a law in 1989 against the use of tests to determine the sex of the unborn child. However it is not banned in neighbouring Gujerat, where women under pressure may easily travel to.

At a less pernicious level, social conditioning adds to the girl child's handicaps. A 'good' woman is submissive and self-effacing, and girls are indoctrinated in uncomplaining docility from birth. If food is short, girls go without; always men and boys eat first, women and girls last. Nutritional deficiencies are higher in girl children within the same family. Although biologically girls are stronger, the mortality rate for girls rises sharply between the ages of one and four, from 109 to 300 per 100 male deaths. One recent study found that 51 per cent of boys were breastfed, compared to 30 per cent of girls: some mothers stop sooner after the birth of a girl so as to conceive again and maybe produce a much longed-for son.

The same pattern is repeated in access to health services. Girl babies are taken to the doctor less often than boys: 63 per cent of cases of female sickness compared to 80 per cent of male, according to the National Institute of Nutrition. And, echoing Leela's grandmother, many parents think that education is wasted on girls, and anyway they are needed at home. The primary school drop-out rate is much higher than for boys.

Much of the hard information about this grim scenario was brought to light as a result of the 1990 Year of the Girl Child. Now the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) countries are planning a Decade of the Girl Child. And slowly there is change for the better.

Leela's case typifies the change. Her mother Ratna began to wish, after all, that Leela could be literate. So for the past six months Leela has been coming to me for lessons in the evenings when we have both finished work. Already she can read aloud from the newspaper. She wants to learn how to use the sewing machine so that she can earn some money stitching. The sense of self-worth that this will bring to her is worth far more than what she will earn.

Education is among the most vital ways to bring about improvement in women's status. The national committee set up to formulate long-term plans for women's advancement has suggested that creche facilities are needed in schools so that girls may bring along the siblings they have to take care of. There are also major programmes for income generation and self-reliance among poor women; the World Bank has recently provided Rs 1,300 million (£26 million) for such a programme in the Hyderabad region of central India.

Further laws – against sex tests of the foetus, for example – and large sums of programme money will not on their own sweep away attitudes passed down through centuries. Social attitudes must also change. With this in view, a series of spots are aired on prime-time national television. One shows a rustic family at dinner with the son's plate piled high with *chapatis* and vegetables while the daughter's has left-overs. The voice-over urges: 'A daughter is just as precious as a son. Don't discriminate'. Some popular serials have highlighted the girl child's plight. One, called *Udaan* ('flight') is about a little farm girl who dreams of becoming a police officer.

Leela sometimes watches television at my place. Her adolescent face alight, she turned to me at the end of one episode. 'When I have a daughter,' she said conspiratorially, 'I'll make her very smart. And she will become an officer!' ■

Sakuntala Narasimhan is a writer on women's issues based in Bangalore.

JULIO ETCHART / REPORTAGE

Town life beckons: many girls travel in hope but arrive in peril.

Maids of all work

Horror stories about child labour imply that girls have it easy. Researchers, focussing on factories and streets, forget the place where millions of girls work almost all the time for next to nothing. ***Judith Ennew*** *takes a look behind closed doors.*

Maria has to sit sideways to fit her legs under the school desk. But that is not the only reason why she looks uncomfortable. At 16, with a mature figure, she stands out from her fellow First Grade pupils, the chattering little girls and boys with whom she is taking the first steps to literacy.

In truth, Maria is not keen to learn to read. The world is a blur to her, full of rules she barely understands. Words and numbers are simply part of the fog. Maria is a domestic servant in Lima, Peru. The heavy grey skies, endless traffic noise, the maze of streets full of unknown people are quite different from the high Andes where she grew up.

'When I arrived in Lima I knew nothing,' says her sister Patricia. 'The Señora taught me everything, the names of things, even how to buy bread. Everything was different, the customs, the food, the music. The house had so many rooms, so many things, electric gadgets I didn't know how to use.'

Patricia and Maria are daughters of subsistence farmers. Rural life was hard, but the mountain air was clear and they knew everyone in the village, every step of the surrounding countryside. The problem came when they passed puberty and the small tenant holding could not support four adults and six children. So they went off to Lima on the battered bus that comes to

CHRIS STEELE-PERKINS / MAGNUM

Meagre holdings in the highlands: older girls are sent away to 'auntie'.

their village once a week, with a distant relative Aunt Delia, an earlier migrant back on a visit.

Aunt Delia promised the girls' parents that she would find them work and schooling. The promise was city life, money and education, as it is for thousands of their contemporaries all over the world.

Domestic work is an almost entirely female occupation, mirroring the bonds between women and the home. For children, it also mirrors the bond between child and family. Many unpaid or poorly-paid domestic workers are migrant girls like Maria and Patricia who live in as servants, but are described as 'family', entrusted to the care of people they call 'aunt' or 'godmother'.

'I live in the house of a lady whom I call "aunt," out of respect', says 16-year-old Gladys. 'But really she isn't a relative. I never knew her before. She said she wanted to provide me with an education, but with the idea I should do all the chores in her house.'

Payment is often in kind. A 1990 survey of girls working as domestic servants in Lima found that 10 per cent received no salary at all, or only pocket money. The rest barely earned enough to cover basic necessities. The food they receive tends to be family leftovers, eaten after the employers have finished, off a plastic plate. Food and clothing sent by their families may be appropriated. Sleeping accommodation tends to be truly basic. One girl was found to sleep under the kitchen table; another in a windowless cupboard previously used for the family dog.

Child domestic workers are normally trapped in their employers' houses, on call for 24 hours a day. Rural parents may be aware that the children they entrust to the 'aunt' or recruiting agent are destined for exploitative domestic work. They may see this as the only possible way for their daugthers to obtain schooling and a job later on. But a girl like Maria, exhausted after an 18-hour day, may go to class only to fall asleep over her lessons. And there is little opportunity to do any homework.

School failure is thus added to their social isolation. They seldom have time or the chance to make friends. So they feel the failure as theirs alone. Their illiteracy means that they cannot write home to their families; most lose touch altogether. Maria is almost totally unable to communicate. Dumb amidst her classmates, she answers questions in mumbled monosyllables. She can neither read, write nor draw.

The long-term effects of this emotional deprivation can be devastating. A childhood characterized by orders, punishment and fear may leave a girl with no sense of self-worth and unable to make lasting relationships. Emotional neediness also fosters sexual exploitation. Lonely, isolated girls may fall in love with any man who gives them attention: 'I met Miguel at a fiesta,' says 15-year-old Gloria, nursing her baby son. 'We made love; it was good; I felt happy and protected. He made lots of promises, but then he left me.'

Frequently, this lover is a member of the employer household. Respectable families think nothing of asking a friend, visiting the countryside, to 'bring back a pretty girl'. It is commonplace for the sons to use the maids for sexual satisfaction – from the family's point of view, this is preferable to their visiting prostitutes. Ironically, if the girl becomes pregnant, she is likely to be thrown out onto the street and forced into prostitution to keep herself and her child.

However grim the life of a 'maid of all work', the girls continue to arrive from the countryside – all over the world. Increasing

rural poverty accelerates the process. In north-east Thailand, for example, recruiting agents persuade parents to hand over their girls for jobs as maids, factory workers or prostitutes so that they can pay off their debts. Research in Peru shows that girls are increasingly arriving at under 10 years old, although nearly half are between 14 and 16. In Bangladesh, the age of six or seven is not uncommon for a servant. At puberty, the girl will be forced to leave, so as to avoid sexual jealousy.

Domestic workers of any age are largely unprotected by law. In Peru no permission is needed to employ minors. There are no fixed hours and time off on public holidays can easily be cancelled at the whim of the employer.

A typical working day for 14-year-old Augustina starts at six when she goes out to buy food for the family's breakfast. She then cleans the house, goes shopping again, prepares lunch. 'After that I have to wash clothes so I don't eat until 3.00 pm. Then there is the ironing or something else. I go to school from 6.30 to 11.00 pm, but I've never done my homework and when I get back, the Señora ticks me off. I still have to wash the dishes before I go to bed.' Augustina's lament is painful. 'I don't know what to do. How can I put up with this life? Is it like this for everyone, or just for me?'

The stories of these Peruvian girls are repeated in all developing countries. Their young and silent presence is in the background of household after household. Seen but not heard, they are the most muted group of the world's hundreds of millions of child labourers. The plight of children on the streets, for example, has received much more attention; but they are visible and often seen as a public nuisance. Domestics are hidden away. In the words of a 1982 UN report, the condition of 'maids of all work' is tantamount to slavery.

The nature of child domestic servitude varies a little from country to country, with the degree of exploitation often corresponding to the degree of poverty and family desperation. However, only in a very few countries has proper research been carried out, although Anti-Slavery International has recently taken up these children's plight as a priority for action.

The isolation of their lives works against them. It is far easier for a public outcry to be raised against child labour in factories and workshops. We do not see the maids' day-to-day drudgery, nor hear the despairing voice of Augustina: 'How can I put up with this life? Is it like this for everyone, or just me?' ■

Judith Ennew is a researcher and writer on children's issues, active in the international child rights lobby. She is currently Director of Y Care International.

A passage out of hell

WHEN Ana Vasconcelos talked to girls living rough in Recife, Brazil, they told her that they thought of the streets as their 'passage to hell'. When she set up the Passage House in 1989, it was named in hope of changing that reality.

On Brazilian streets, girls adrift are less common than boys. But their choices are fewer and chances of psychological damage greater. Street boys can identify with adventurous and daring male roles. For Brazilian girls, there is only the nurturing mother-saint, a far cry from the trade in street sex to which many are reduced. These girls feel spiritually lost. 'I know it is not right what I am,' said one 11-year-old girl. 'I know I am worthless.' There are thought to be 500,000 girls on Brazilian streets earning money from prostitution.

The girls come from homes that have rejected them, broken down or become intolerable from pressures linked with poverty. Or they escaped from houses where they were placed as domestic workers, from institutions or brothels. Many have been violently or sexually abused. Many sniff glue or take drugs for comfort.

Few talk of fathers – 'A father is a luxury' said one. Many speak of physical violence: 'My mother died when I was 10; she was shot and fell dead on top of me'.' Many speak of anger: 'I wanted to wake up dead. I wanted the newspaper to publish my picture very large to embarrass my mother.'

Most of the girls would like to do the same jobs as street boys – car washing, shoe cleaning or petty trading. Some do, but they tend to be rejected by the boys' gangs and public attitudes can make it very difficult. 'I tried to sell people sweets, but they spat at me,' said one girl.

Street girls soon find out that they have something that they can sell: their sex. If they don't name a price, it will be stolen. 'They sell their bodies to protect themselves – to avoid people doing what they want for nothing,' says Ana Vasconcelos. But this deepens society's condemnation and their own sense of worthlessness. Many blame the mother who failed to protect them.

Rights of passage: the transition from street life begins.

Before the Passage House, street educators managed to make little contact with the girls. 'They wanted to organize them for the political fight,' says Ana. 'But girls had more urgent needs. What can I do not to be raped; what can I do when I menstruate on the streets; what can I do not to get pregnant? Educators were not in a position to deal with such questions. So the girls went away.'

The Passage House educators keep in touch with the girls on the streets and have learned how to counter their self-condemnation. 'The girls repeat the judgments of others,' says Ana. 'We ask, "Why are you bad? Look at that boy – he does the same things as you but you don't think him bad. Why not?"' They are helped to understand what has brought them to street life. Some come to realize that their 'wicked' mothers were as powerless and identity-less as they are.

At the Passage House day centre the girls help formulate the rules. Glue sniffing is banned, as are drugs or knives in the house. The girls cook for themselves and clean. There is medical and psychological support, as well as practical advice on how to live more safely on the streets. Those with children are given child-care training.

For some, this is a place of temporary respite; for others, the beginning of transition away from street life. Where possible, girls are helped to return home. Those who cannot go back, but really want to leave the street, are offered a place in one of several small residential houses owned by the programme.

Ana believes that most of the girls can change. Even the older girls – less likely to change radically – learn to behave differently towards their own daughters. But the world in which the girls seek a fresh start is more intractable. 'We have girls right now who are prepared for non-prostitution work and prepared for life, but who will give them a job so they can survive with dignity?'

Anthony Swift

JENNY MATHEWS / WOMANKIND

Being a girl

What's it like being a girl? It's unusual for girls themselves to be able to convey this in a way that adults will understand. Children of either sex aren't given to explaining their situation or analyzing their feelings in adult language.

So most girls' stories are either told by women writers drawing upon their own memories, or by adult journalists and researchers as a result of interviews. Often these will be pursuing a particular theme – girl exploitation, for example – rather than trying to discern what 'being a girl' is about. So pieces like the ones that follow, that really capture the experience, are rare.

Little goddess

THE Shakya clan of Nepal have the custom of enthroning a very young girl as a *Kumari* – a living Goddess. The most important qualification is for the girl to have a flawless body. The first loss of blood from any source – a cut or loss of her baby teeth – means that the Goddess can no longer dwell in her and must move into a new body.

Anita Shakya was *Kumari* for six years. 'I was enthroned when I was only four. The priests read horoscopes of a number of girls without a single scar on their bodies, and I was chosen. I had to leave home and live in the temple, where I was looked after by a family who attended me.

'I was worshipped every morning from seven to nine o'clock in the morning. I wore red and gold silk clothes and sat on a high throne. The priests would perform their daily *puja* (prayer) and touch my feet with their heads. I really felt I had a divine power while I was being worshipped like that.

'During special religious occasions such as *Indra Jatra*, I would be publicly exposed. I was carried in an elaborate chariot through the city while thousands paid homage. Actually, this was the most fascinating part! I loved these rides! People gave money and clothes and every year the King gave me a gold coin. But I was never allowed to touch it – all the riches were taken by the family who looked after me.

'When I was 10 and my menstruation was drawing near, I had to stop being *Kumari*. When they brought me home and I realized I was no longer a Goddess, my eyes filled with tears. As a token of being *Kumari* I was just given an old, tattered piece of gold embroidered cloth. Nothing more. And I learned nothing during those years. I have had a hard time catching up in school.'

In fact, the ex-*Kumari* is given a small monthly stipend for her services. But this may not compensate for all the difficulties of re-adapting to normal life. Especially as there is a belief that the man who marries an ex-*Kumari* dies young, so in spite of her beauty there will be few candidates for the hand of Anita Shakya.

She is wistful. 'I really enjoyed being a *Kumari*, it was more fun than being a normal girl. I feel sad when I see the new *Kumari* being carried in the chariot. I feel a great sense of loss.'

From ***Voice of Child Workers*****, CWIN (Centre for Child Workers in Nepal) Newsletter, No 10, 1991**

Breakfast with Anneli (aged two and a half)

'AT breakfast today Anneli talks about making a mess with food on the table and mentions that Felix does this. When I explain that Felix is smaller than she is, almost still a baby really (two months younger in fact) and that that's why he can't eat properly yet, she says, "But Felix is bigger than me, and Schorschi [one month younger] is as well."

'I say, "No, they're both smaller than you," to which she replies, "No, they're boys and boys are bigger than me."

'I'm shocked by this statement, since to Anneli being bigger means being able to do things and allowed to do them. I ask her who told her this. She says it was Barbara, Felix's mother. I don't believe this and can only imagine that she had misunderstood one mother saying to another that boys were bigger in size and interpreted this in terms of her expectations of life. Another of those ominous atmospheric items that help give boys an advantage and teach girls to respect the male and give them that insidious, lifelong inferiority complex.

'In the afternoon she's sitting in the lavatory chattering to herself. She says, "Schorschi is a boy and I'm a girl."

'I ask, "What's Daddy?"

'She: "A boy."

'I: "And what's Mummy?"

'She: "A boy." I laugh.

'When she comes back into the living room she says, "Everybody's a boy, I'm the only girl." She seems to have internalized a hierarchy in which the person on the bottom rung has to be a girl; all the others are boys.

'Later she's hammering nails with her little wooden mallet. She really enjoys it and I encourage her. Then she says, "Just like Daddy." I feel peeved because she's seen me knock in nails. But it can't have been enough.'

From Marianne Grabrucker's diary of her daughter's first three years, *There's a Good Girl*, **published by The Women's Press, London, 1988.**

Girl bullies

'LITTLE girls are cute and small only to adults. To one another they're not cute. They're life-sized.' This is an adult remembering with horror the power play which goes on between girls at school in their pre-teen and teenage years. The feelings associated with those experiences can evoke pain – or guilt – years later.

'All the girls in my class – it was only the girls who were involved – picked on one girl and made her life a complete misery. I don't really know what was different about her. When I think of her now I can't see why she became a class victim. She wasn't an unpleasant person; she wasn't ever nasty to any of us. But she looked a bit different – bigger, better developed. Maybe it was because she was self-conscious about her body.

'The image I have is of her standing, often pressed into the corner, with folded arms. If she came anywhere near any of us, if she brushed past us, we would immediately jump away and go: "Oh, Sarah's germs, Sarah's germs" as if they were somewhere on us, on our clothes or fingers, and we would run over to someone else, and smear our hands on that person and go: "There you are, Sarah's germs, no returns, no returns".

'We did that all the time, every time she came anywhere near us. She must have felt like a leper. It was if her physical presence in the room made us all feel ill. And the strange thing about it is that now, if I see someone from those days, all of us remember that time and feel a dreadful guilt about it. None of us knows why we did it. And I'm sure it must have left a mark on her.'

From *Blood Sports for Girls*, **produced by Tessa Watt for BBC Radio 4, 23 July 1992**

PHOTOS (BOTTOM LEFT, CLOCKWISE): PHILIP WOLMUTH / PANOS; STEVE McCURRY / MAGNUM; RAISSA PAGE / FORMAT; MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT; MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES.

Going to Grannie's

There can be no more grievous assault on girlhood than the mutilation of female genitalia. Why does it happen? Can it be prevented? ***Janie Hampton*** *reports.*

Sudan: the midwife wants to circumcise her granddaughter. But her daughter, El Ham, doesn't want her to.

It now took a quarter of an hour for her to pee. Her menstrual periods lasted ten days. She was incapacitated by cramps lasting nearly half the month. There were premenstrual cramps: cramps caused by the near impossibility of flow passing through so tiny an aperture as M'Lissa had left after fastening together the raw sides of Tashi's vagina with a couple of thorns and inserting a straw so that in healing, the traumatized flesh might not grow together, shutting the opening completely; cramps caused by the residual flow that could not find its way out, was not reabsorbed into her body and had nowhere to go. There was the odour too, of soured blood, which no amount of scrubbing ever washed off.

THE passage is fictional. It might well be fact. It comes from *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, a new novel by Alice Walker. The black American feminist who writes with candour about culture-charged areas of female lives has chosen to explore the practice whereby millions of African girls arrive at womanhood with their clitoris wholly or partly cut out. Walker has faced up to the attack that, as an American woman, she has no right to oppose African culture. She has described a young woman's desire, later regretted, to become a full member of her tribe by subjecting herself to genital mutilation.

Walker's renown has helped to raise consciousness about a process many African girls look forward to – inexplicably in Western eyes – as their rebirth as a mature woman.

'Female circumcision', as it is euphemistically called, comes in different degrees of severity. In the mildest form, *sunna*, the hood of a girl's clitoris is cut off. The most common form is total excision – clitoridectomy. The extreme form, infibulation, involves cutting off both clitoris and labia minora, and scraping out the flesh inside the labia majora. The vulva is sown together or pinned with thorns, leaving a very small aperture. In the village setting, there is no anaesthetic, beyond sitting in a cold stream. The operation is carried out by older women on girls aged from a few months to puberty depending on local custom. Their legs are tied until the wound has healed.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 90 million girls and women alive today have endured one or other procedure, and that two million more girls do so each year. Most are in Sahelian Africa, especially Sudan, Somalia and Mali; but girls in Arab States and parts of Asia are also mutilated in this way. In Europe and North America some immigrant families persist in the practice, either finding willing doctors or sending their unsuspecting daughters home in the school holidays.

The campaign against female genital mutilation began in earnest around 12 years ago. Originally much of the impetus came from Western feminists, but African women have become increasingly active and now predominate. The subject is extremely sensitive not only because it concerns women's sexuality in so acute a way but because to outsiders the shocking nature of a custom taken for granted in so many traditional African societies represents both African men and the mothers and 'grannies' who insist upon and perform the operation as barbarous.

Whatever the desire to respect other people's cultures, how can such a practice be condoned? More and more African women insist that it cannot. 'I love my culture,' says Hadijah Ahmed of the African Women's Welfare Group, 'but it is not this. This is torture hiding behind culture. Children have no voice – adult women must speak out to protect them.'

Why is genital mutilation performed on African girls? It is seen as part of the ritual passage from childhood to adulthood, carried out at the climax of various rites performed to signify that girls are ready to be passed on from the ownership of a father to that of a husband. Without the hallmark of 'circumcision', the girl could not find a husband or be treated as a full member of adult society.

The practice, then, is the female counterpart of male coming-of-age rituals. But to this, Efua Dorkenoo, director of the Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD) responds: 'This is far worse than male circumcision, both at the time and in long-term effects. This can only be described as mutilation.'

IAN PUNTER / BBC

The practice awesomely exemplifies men's fear of women's sexuality. Cut and restitched, the girl's genital area is under control. If her virginity is lost, and the fleshly seal breached, it will be obvious. Men are guaranteed virgins who are unlikely to stray. Sex for the future woman is to be a duty, not a pleasure.

To some eyes, the results of genital reconstruction are appealing, an improvement on the wet, lumpy natural female genitals, source of uncontrollable desires. After thousands of years aesthetic view conforms with deeply embedded attitudes about sex, virginity and marriage. After the operation a girl is smooth, dry and in control of her body.

Many of the peoples who practise infibulation come from remote desert areas and cling to ancient ways. They fear that an end to the practice would lead to an epidemic of premarital and extramarital sex. The urban lifestyle is seen as shockingly degenerate and immoral. This perception causes many parents to reaffirm the decision to have their daughters 'done' even when they are far from home and the notion that they cannot otherwise find husbands or be socially accepted is hard to sustain. Some believe that there is a religious obligation to operate on their daughters, though no established religion endorses this.

Apart from the risks to the girl of the actual operation – haemorrhage, tetanus, septicaemia, damaged urinary tract, severe pain, psychological shock, even death – the health effects last a lifetime. Infections due to trapped urine or menstrual blood may lead to infertility. Sex may be painful, birth complicated. Dr Mary McCaffery, a London obstetrician, was shocked when she saw her first infibulated pregnant woman. 'Somehow a baby had to get out of a tiny hole surrounded by scar tissue. Internal examination is impossible.' McCaffery operates to remove scar tissue several weeks before the birth. 'Even with a general anaesthetic some of the women scream when their genitals are touched. The pain is not just physical – it goes very, very deep and will be with them for ever.'

In the Western world, steps have been taken to outlaw female genital mutilation where it is practised among immigrant groups. In Canada the practice violates the criminal code and a practitioner can get up to 14 years' imprisonment; parents, up to 10 years for criminal negligence. In 1985, it was made explicitly illegal in Britain, and a child at risk can be put on the child protection register.

However, in the Netherlands the Minister of Health has been asked to make the practice allowable in Dutch hospitals. 'The proposers believe that this is safer than illegal operations, and non-racist,' said Berhane Ras-Work, President of the Inter-African Committee (IAC) Against Harmful Traditional Practices. 'But this would put our work back to the beginning.' The WHO concurs. 'To permit the operation in the hygienic conditions of hospitals grants it medical acceptance and effectively legalizes it,' says Dr Liela Mehra.

But the main efforts to prevent daughters from 'going to granny's' must take place in the countries concerned. The leading international organization in this context is the IAC which now has member groups in 23 African countries. The IAC avoids value judgments, pointing instead to the physical and psychological health damage to girls and women. The groups hold workshops and promote training among village midwives – guardians of women's reproductive health in much of Africa.

Education, especially of women, is the single most important factor in persuading parents to abandon the practice. Not only can education impart health dangers, but it provides an alternative context in which precious notions about feminine sexuality and marital responsibility can be upheld. Traditionalists need to learn that virginity is prized in many societies, but does not require that clitoridectomy be performed as a sanction.

Progress is slow, but it is happening. In Burkino Faso, for example, a national committee of politicians and popular associations is active. Prison sentences of up to 10 years are meted out to dissuade practitioners. A Burkinabe film has been made: *My daughter has not been excised*. 'Many mothers are now proud to show us their daughters who have not been mutilated,' says Ras-Work. 'The practice is definitely decreasing. With effort it should eventually die out.' ■

Janie Hampton is a freelance writer specializing in women's health issues.

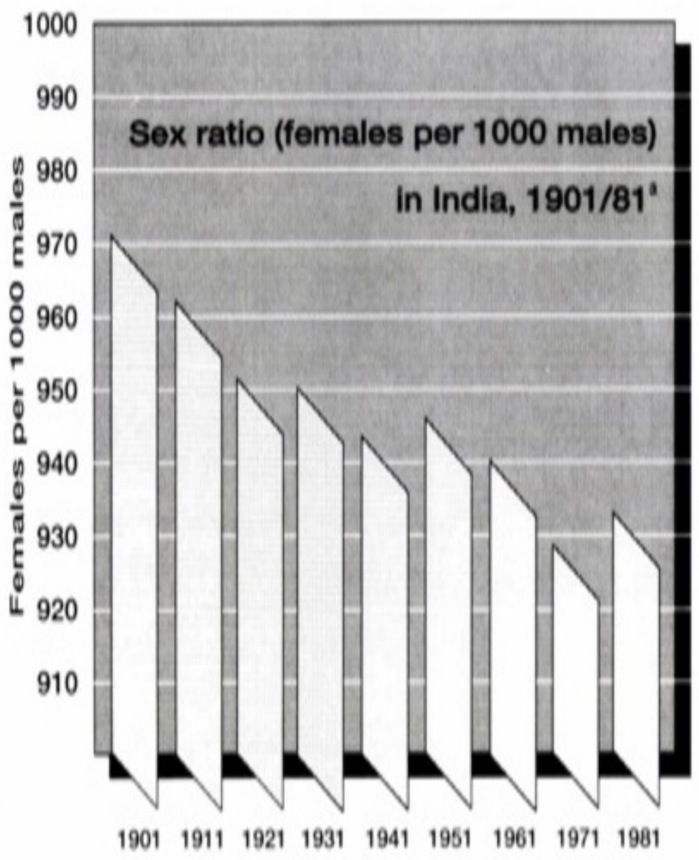
GIRLS - THE FACTS

There are few reliable facts about girls because most research still doesn't distinguish them either from women or from boy children.

LIFE

If girls were valued and given the same care as boys there would be at least another 100 million women in the world.[1]

● In India the proportion of girls to boys surviving infancy has declined since 1901. In China the one-child policy begun in 1979 caused a dramatic rise in infant girl deaths; from 38 per 1000 in 1978, to an estimated 58 in 1982.[2]

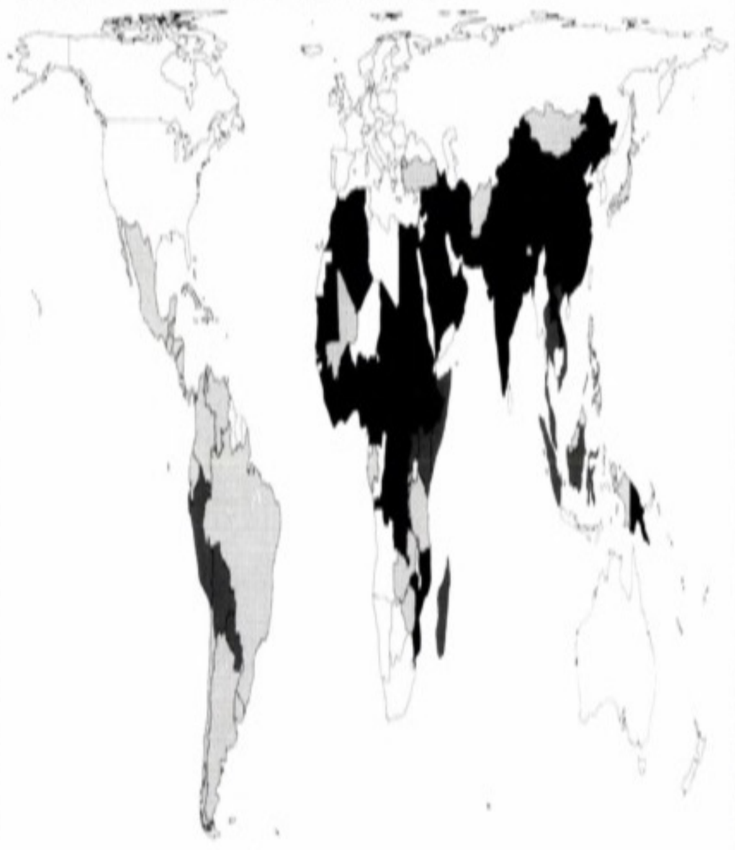


EDUCATION

In South Asia, Africa and Middle East, girls get much less education than boys.

● In developing countries fewer girls than boys go to school and they spend fewer years there. Out of 100 million children not in primary school, two-thirds are girls.[4]

THE GENDER GAP IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS [5]



Note: The gender gap is the difference between the primary enrolment rate of boys and that of girls.

GIRLHOOD: A PERILOUS PATH

PREBIRTH

Tests that tell the gender of a foetus are used by parents in India and China to abort unwanted females. Of 8,000 foetuses aborted in a Bombay clinic during the late 1980s only one was male.[7]

BIRTH

An unwanted girl baby may be killed at birth or allowed to die when she falls ill. In parts of Hunan Province, China, 60% more girls die than boys.[10]

INFANCY

Girls are biologically more resilient than boys but shorter breastfeeding and less health care threaten girls' survival chances. In Jordan 100 girl infants die for every 85 boy deaths.[11]

EARLY CHILDHOOD (1-5 years)

Less food and care for girls leads to illness and stunted growth. Girls in Tunisia are twice as likely as boys to die of diarrhoeal infection.[12]

CHILDHOOD (6-12 years)

Child labour and domestic duties rob girls of childhood and disrupt their education. Girls as young as eight commonly go into domestic service in Nepal and Bangladesh.[13]

ADOLESCENCE

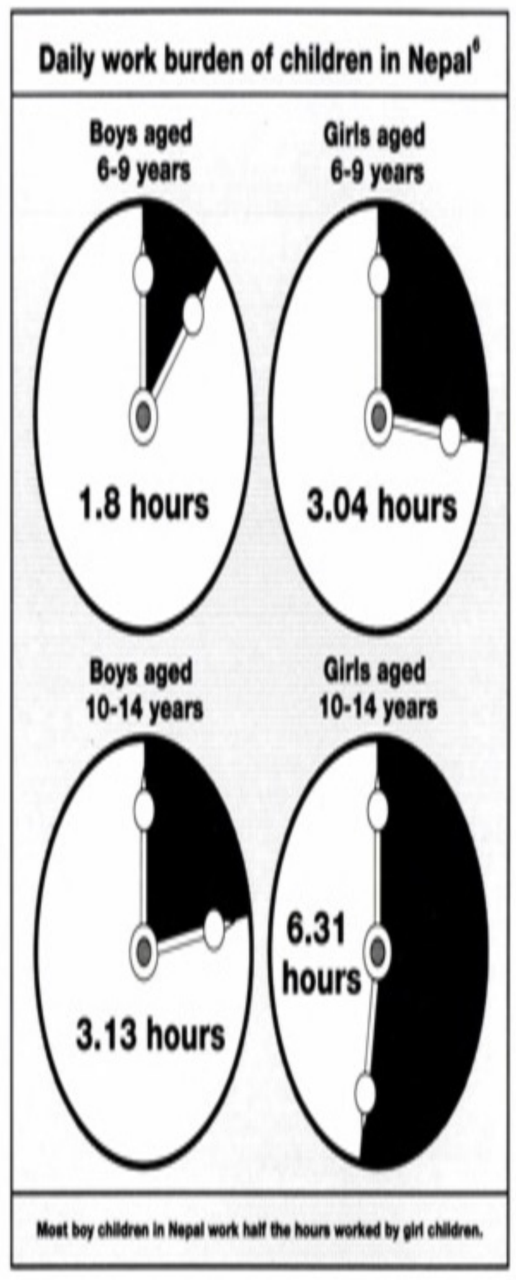
Girls who are unschooled and an economic burden are married off at an early age, by arrangement and sometimes for cash. Half the girls in Bahrain are married by the age of 15.[12]

TEENAGE MOTHERHOOD

Babies born to girls younger than 18 are often born too early, are too small, and cause extra health risks to their mothers. A quarter of the 500,000 women who die in childbirth annually are teenage girls.[3]

WORK

Working girls have fewer opportunities, work harder and earn less than boys – and are rarely noticed by researchers.



● In Java, girls spend 30% more hours per day working than boys.[5]

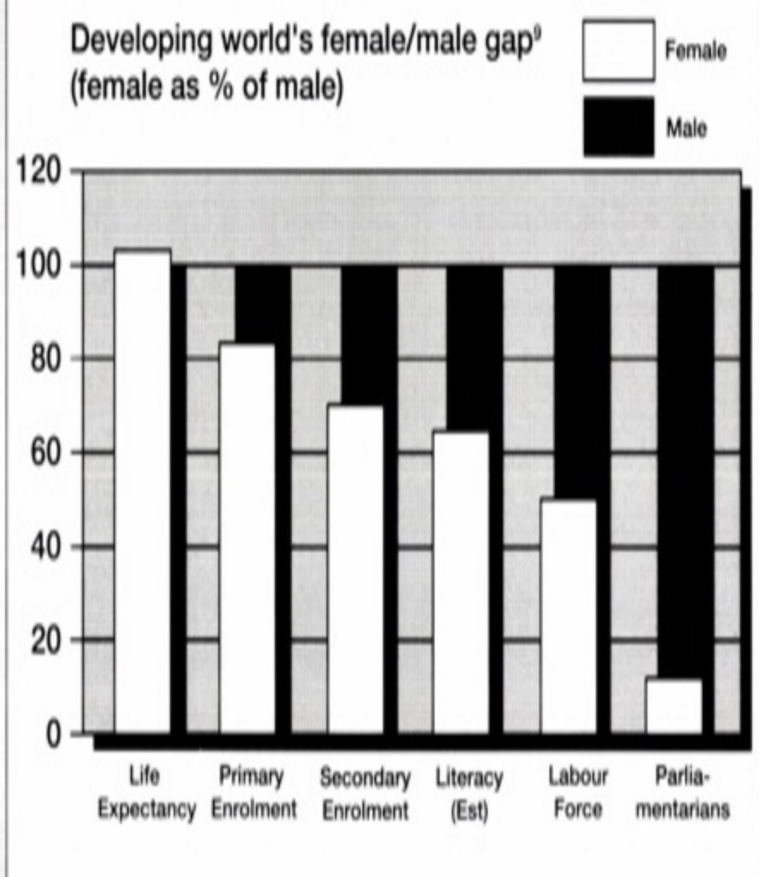
● In Chinese and Indian households in Malaysia, girls aged 7-9 work 120-150% more hours than boys.[5]

● In India, the rural girl child works 9 hours a day for an average of 315 days a year.[7]

● In Thailand, 200,000-400,000 girls under the age of 16 earn money by selling sex.[8]

FUTURES

Girls live longer than boys – but in every other way their chances in life are worse, and worsen as they get older.



1 Amartya Sen, 'More than 100 Million Women are Missing', *NY Review of Books*, 20 December 1990. 2 Judith Banister, *China's Changing Population*, Stanford University Press, 1987. 3 UNICEF Information Kit, *SAARC Year of the Girl Child 1990*. 4 UNDP, *Human Development Report 1991*. 5 Elizabeth E King, *Educating Girls and Women: Investing in Development*, World Bank, 1990 6 Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, *Work burden of a girl child in Nepal*, Kathmandu 1990. 7 Ministry of Human Resource Development, *The Lesser Child: the Girl in India*, India, 1990. 8 The Centre for Protection of Children's Rights, Thailand quoted in *First Call for Children*, UNICEF, April-June 1992. 9 *The Girl Child*, UNICEF, 1991. 10 *Guangming Daily*, Central China, quoted by Reuters, 14 October 1988.11 WHO, *Health Implications of Sex Discrimination in Childhood*, 1986. 12 UNICEF MENA, *Sex Differences in Child Survival and Development*, 1990. 13 Anti-Slavery International, internal report, 1992.

ILLUSTRATIONS: CLIVE OFFLEY

Lolita's not to blame

Only recently has it become recognized that the impact on the sexually abused girl can last a lifetime – especially if she feels that somehow she was to blame. ***Roxanne Snider*** *reports.*

ONCE seen as confined to a handful of crazed paedophiles, child sexual abuse is now recognized as endemic to society. Only very recently have we begun to acknowledge and address the unthinkable proportions of this problem.

By far the most abuse – a term covering everything from suggestive petting and fondling to penetration and rape – is against girls. Statistics vary, but the widely accepted view in North America is that one in four girls and one in eight boys are sexually abused before the age of 18. Unlike boys, who tend to be abused by a teacher or coach outside the family, girls are usually abused by someone within it: fathers, brothers, male partners of their mothers, uncles, cousins, grandfathers. Only 10 per cent of child sexual abuse is at the hands of total strangers. Over 90 per cent of the offenders are men.

Just as every occurrence of sexual abuse within families – incest – is characterized by secrecy and suppression, so has the history of this reality been subjected to the most rigorous denial. Widespread incest was first uncovered in 1896 by Sigmund Freud who, in *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, concluded that the origin of the then most common female psychiatric complaint was childhood incest. A year later he repudiated this theory entirely, claiming that his female patients had lied to him and were merely projecting their incestuous fantasies. Apparently the prevalence of child molestation in upright, bourgeois Viennese families was too high – and too awkward – to be believed.

No less repressive an attitude was to be found 50 years later in the US, when Kinsey's 1953 report *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* also uncovered widespread girlhood sexual abuse. Kinsey did not deny the findings but he assured the public that the girls concerned would not be seriously upset by such experiences.

These reactions of denial and belittlement are still being played out in families and courtrooms today. At stake is the sanctity of the family as a social ideal and the time-honoured notion that whatever goes on inside its boundaries – whether wife-battering or incest – is none of society's nor the law's business. Behind the smokescreen of 'keeping the family together at all costs' lies the true stake: men's inalienable rights to do as they please sexually and in other ways within their domestic fiefdoms.

Sexism and sexual abuse are linked. Father-daughter incest frequently occurs in families where sex roles are rigidly divided and where men exert strict control over the lives of wives and progeny. Incest families are also often characterized by marital discord, a hostile mother-daughter relationship, and lack of a strong, supportive mother. When children are reared by subordinate women a psychology of male domination and female victimization tends to be reproduced in their offspring.

Girls in such families are primed very early to become pleasing and compliant. Survivors of incest often recall being enrolled as 'little mothers' – their task that of 'keeping Daddy happy'. When this began to entail sexual favours many

ILLUSTRATION: CLAUDIA SCHMID

believed that this was one more aspect of their duty to please and part of their responsibility to calm family tension.

Only recently has the true impact of incest on children and adult survivors been analyzed – and found to be far from Kinsey's 'not very upsetting'. Sexually abused children are prone to a huge variety of psychological and behavioural problems: bedwetting; nightmares and sleep disorders; depression; anxiety; running away from home; multiple personality disorders; precocious sexual behaviour or its inverse, extreme inhibition; low self-esteem; inability to experience feelings.

Unless the child receives prompt support and treatment upon disclosure, much of this havoc may carry over into adulthood. Ninety per cent of women in Canada's mental-health system and 80 per cent of women in prison were physically or sexually abused as children. A high percentage of women in prostitution or with histories of substance abuse experienced incest in girlhood.

One of the most damaging effects of sexual abuse is the child's own sense of responsibility for what took place. The Lolita syndrome – the idea that little girls seduce older males – shifts much of the responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim. And indeed, the circumstances of incest can easily give young girls the sense of being to blame.

If not outright force, men will use bribes, threats or trickery to get what they want. Any child who accepts a lollipop for fondles may imagine she has agreed to what follows. A guilt-ridden abuser often tells a girl that it was 'all her fault', that she was 'bad' or 'dirty'. For some the abuse is the only form of attention or 'affection' they get. Finally, because children are essentially powerless, assuming they have some influence can give a much-needed sense of control – however illusory. Anything rather than think that the adult they trust and depend upon could be so bad. How else to explain the six-year-old who says: 'It was my fault 'cos my eyes were open'?

Virtually all sexual abuse takes place behind a wall of secrecy which is usually maintained by threats: 'If you tell, you'll be sent away', or: 'I'll be sent to jail and you'll starve'. Growing public awareness is gradually changing attitudes towards girls who speak out – but most are still disbelieved. Disclosures are still met with accusations such as 'liar' and 'little whore', or greeted with more threats, silence or the injunction never to speak of it again. After girls 'tell' they're usually very fearful and feel they've committed an awful betrayal.

Because of the enormous pressure on children not to disclose, most reports are made to child-care authorities by teachers, doctors or relatives. Virtually all men deny their culpability – to their families, the child-care agencies and in court if it gets that far.

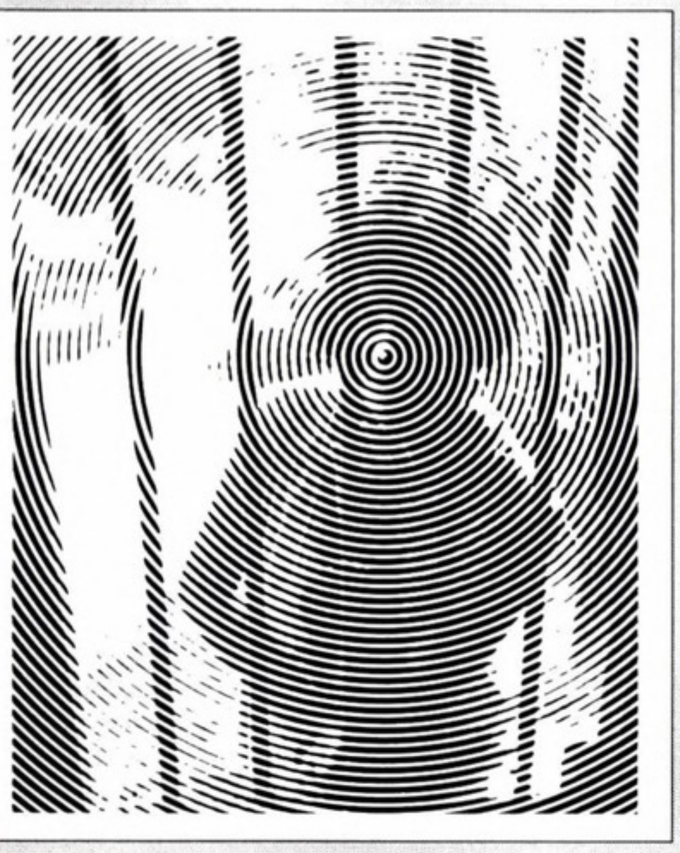
Very few cases of child sexual abuse end up in court. Despite progressive changes in 1988 to Canada's Criminal Code, there is still widespread doubt regarding the legal system's ability to handle these cases. One children's advocate with 20 years' experience of abuse cases complains: 'The court system is antiquated. It was established on the basis of protecting men's property and is ill-prepared to cope with crimes against women and children. Everyone is psychically overwhelmed by the legal implications of incest, and kids simply don't get a fair shake.'

As far as testimony is concerned, the word of a young girl rarely carries the same weight as an adult's. This is shored up by the popular belief that children cannot distinguish reality from fantasy and by the pernicious pseudo-scientific proposition that there is such a thing as 'False Memory Syndrome' which is used to discredit as fabrication many accounts of abuse.

No less odious is the pressure often put

Jailed for being raped

UNDER the Hudood Ordinances promulgated by General Zia ul Haq in 1979, a woman or girl who reports a rape is liable to find herself accused of the serious offence of *zina* — adultery. The rape survivor is assumed guilty of 'illicit sexual intercourse' unless she can prove innocence. This requires producing, as witnesses to the act, four Muslim adult males of good character.



MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

In 1984 a 15-year-old parentless girl called Jenhan Mina was raped by her uncle and her cousin while staying at their home to tend her sick aunt. Later, when she showed signs of pregnancy, she confessed to another uncle that the rape had occurred. He went to the police and a case was set in motion. Jehan Mina had to be protected from the accused uncle and her grandfather who wanted to kill her.

When the case came to trial the accused men were acquitted. Not surprisingly there were no 'four adult male witnesses' to the crime. And the court found that the men could not be punished merely on the basis of Jehan Mina's statement, which had thrown the entire blame of adultery on the 'other two co-accused'. Her pregnancy was seen as a confession of *zina* and she was sentenced to 100 lashes, the maximum penalty.

On appeal the sentence was mitigated to three years' imprisonment and 10 lashes. She was not acquitted because the court found it unsatisfactory that she had waited until her pregnancy became apparent to make the accusation against her uncle.

Jehan Mina served her sentence and gave birth to her child in jail. Although no woman has since been sentenced to the maximum penalty for adultery, the number of imprisonments under the Hudood Ordinances is rising: 738 in 1990, compared to 503 in 1984.

Maria del Nevo in Lahore.

on children to 'recant' their accusation. Parents or relatives will offer rewards if only the girl will 'tell the lawyer she was lying'. When charges are laid in incest cases the stakes rise considerably, for if a father is sentenced the family's economic security may collapse. In such cases family and friends will sometimes rally around the offender in order to save the family from public disgrace or lifestyle disruption.

The good news is that the legal system – flawed though it may be – is far better than it was 10 years ago. Amongst the judiciary there are mixed feelings about how serious a crime child sexual abuse is. Recently some stiff sentences of 8-10 years for sexual assault and incest have been upheld in the Court of Appeals, although average sentences tend to be two to three years: the same as for bank robbery.

A breakthrough came this year when Canada's Supreme Court ruled that adults may file lawsuits years after the event, after the usual statutes of limitations have expired. Headway is also being made through court preparation programmes for children. Beginning in Toronto this March, a special courtroom will be set up to meet the unique needs of children in sexual abuse trials.

In the past five years there have been major changes in the therapeutic understanding and treatment of sexually abused children. One clinical worker who trains therapists across North America observes: 'The shift has to do with understanding sexual abuse from a trauma perspective. The crucial thing is not so much what happened, but how that event was experienced.'

Leading-edge thinking focuses on four key factors: the age of the child (the younger, the greater the impact); whether sadism was involved (ritual abuse tends to cause the most severe effects); whether there was support around disclosure and, perhaps most important, the degree to which the girl or woman blames herself for what happened. 'When kids can't believe that it's not their fault, healing is next to impossible,' said one child therapist.

Working with a small girl's visual images, through drawing, painting or sculpting, seems to be effective. Where the abuse takes place when the child is still in a pre-verbal phase the experience is not rooted in language. The story of what happened is also difficult to 'tell' because it is frightening and humiliating. Drawing it – showing what they see when they close their eyes – allows them to externalize the image in order, hopefully, to be free of it.

For adult women survivors therapy usually begins with the basic, yet terrifying, act of remembering. Decades may pass before women – some in their 50s and 60s – surmise they were sexually abused as children. For some, entire blocks of personal history are beyond recall: 'I remember nothing before the age of 12,' said one. 'Major parts of my memory are totally locked with abuse. It's like a virus in a computer – you just lose stuff.'

Recall can begin with flashbacks or sudden unbidden flickerings of memory. It can be triggered by such disparate occurrences as hearing or reading an account of abuse; making love; the death of a parent; a tactile experience in some way related to the abuse. It can come with the breaking of an addiction: alcohol and drug abuse are often means of holding down awareness and pain around incest. Revelations are almost always followed by a psychic upheaval, leading to intense feelings of terror, denial, shame, grief, anger. At this point, finding a therapeutic setting where she can go through these feelings in an atmosphere of safety and affirmation becomes crucial to healing. 'What I needed most of all,' said one, 'was someone who would really listen. So I could tell this story over and over, get bored, and then tell it over and over again. The goal was not to let it have any more power in my life.'

The vast majority of women incest survivors find 'off-centre' – non-medical, non-Freudian – therapists with strong feminist perspectives to be the nost helpful. Despite the flood of information to the contrary, there is still a tendency by mainstream psychiatrists to downplay the emotional significance of sexual abuse. Said one survivor: 'It's really important to define for ourselves what the experience was about. Feminist thinking has given us that space. For myself, the most helpful thing was figuring out how to work on this – to take charge. That very act stands against the old pattern of powerlessness.'

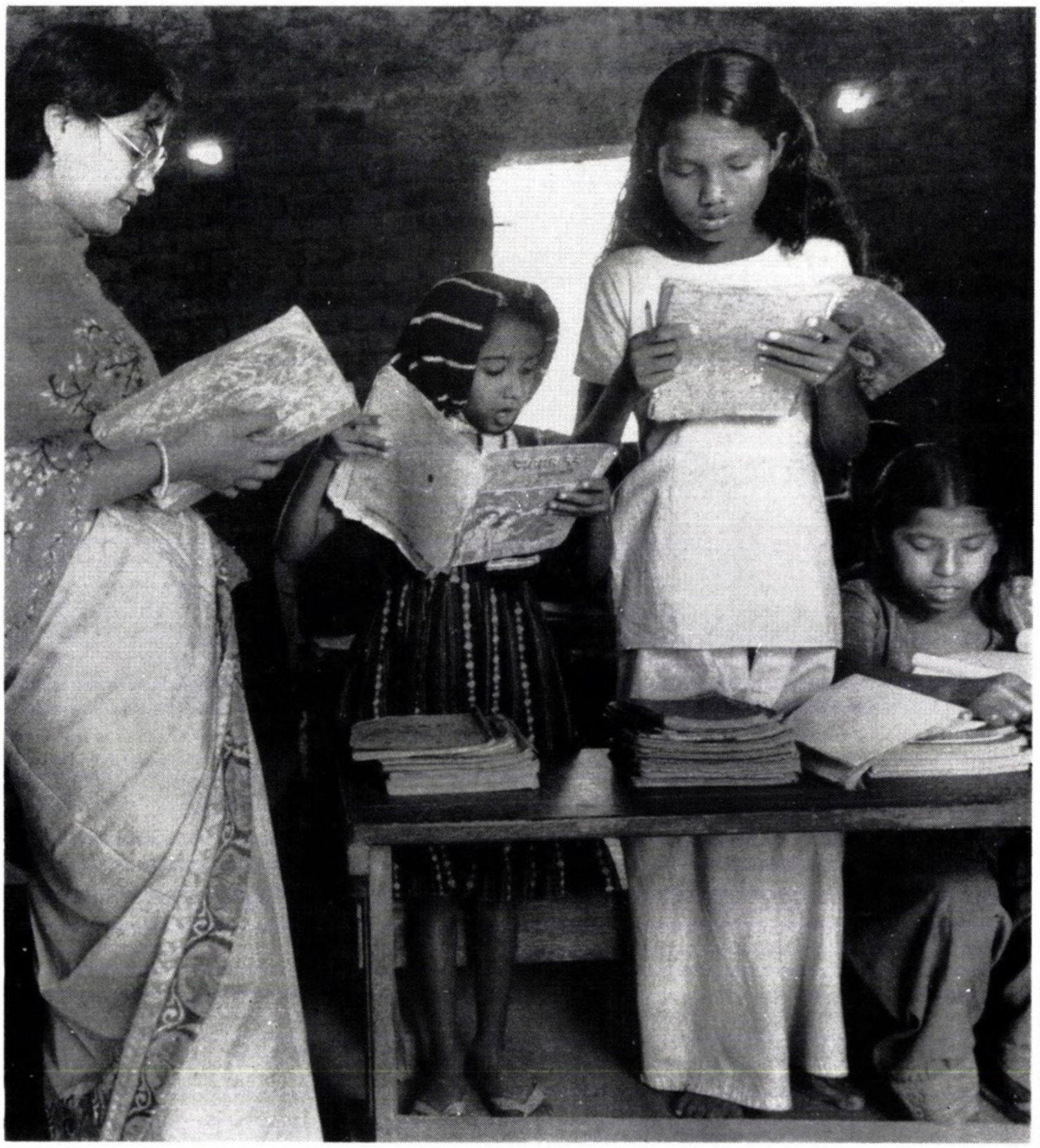
The feelings of power that many survivors speak of are feelings they never had access to as girls. If, instead of rewarding young girls for cuteness and compliance, we encouraged confidence and the right to set and defend their boundaries, maybe the cycle of victimization might be broken. ■

Roxanne Snider is a Toronto-based freelance writer who specializes in cultural and social issues.

RAISSA PAGE / FORMAT

Chalking up victories

Small revolutions are happening in classrooms in Bangladesh, Ghana and Barbados. Reports from the front row by ***Shahidul Alam*** *and* ***Raana Haider, Ajoa Yeboah-Afari*** *and* ***Sara Cameron****.*



MARK EDWAERDS / STILL PICTURES

EVER since the 1790s – when British feminist Mary Wollstonecraft railed against training girls to be delicate, foolish, ignorant and vain – education has been seen as the gateway to equality.

In the West girls may still be up against sexist stereotypes about what is 'suitable' for them; about what they are 'good at' and 'bad at'. In the South the problems facing girls are much more basic – such as whether they are allowed to go to school at all. In Africa and Asia many girls are kept at home or drop out of school after only a year or two. Often parents think there is little point in educating girls and they may decide that they cannot afford the school fees or manage without the work their daughters do at home or in the fields.

Activists and teachers in poor countries are trying to bring about change – to get girls into school, to keep them there, and to give those who missed out on school a second chance.

We look at three initiatives from different parts of the South. Shahidul Alam and Raana Haider report from Bangladesh, where only three per cent of girls complete primary school. Ajoa Yeboah-Afari looks at how girls are studying to become technicians in schools in Ghana; and Sara Cameron interviews some determined schoolgirl mothers in Barbados.

DHAKA, BANGLADESH

At 17 Mozammat Razia Begum is older than most of the girls in her class at the Narandi School. She was married at 15 but her husband abandoned her.

'If I had been educated he would not have been able to abandon me so readily, leaving me nothing for maintenance,' she says. The marriage of young girls without proper contracts – followed soon after by abandonment – is a serious social problem in Bangladesh. Razia blames her parents. 'My parents were wrong to marry me off so young. If I had a daughter, I should not let her marry until she was at least 19.'

The school Razia attends is one of 6,000 non-formal village schools set up by BRAC – the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee – exclusively for pupils who have never started school and those who had to drop out. Three-quarters of the 180,000 pupils are girls. Although

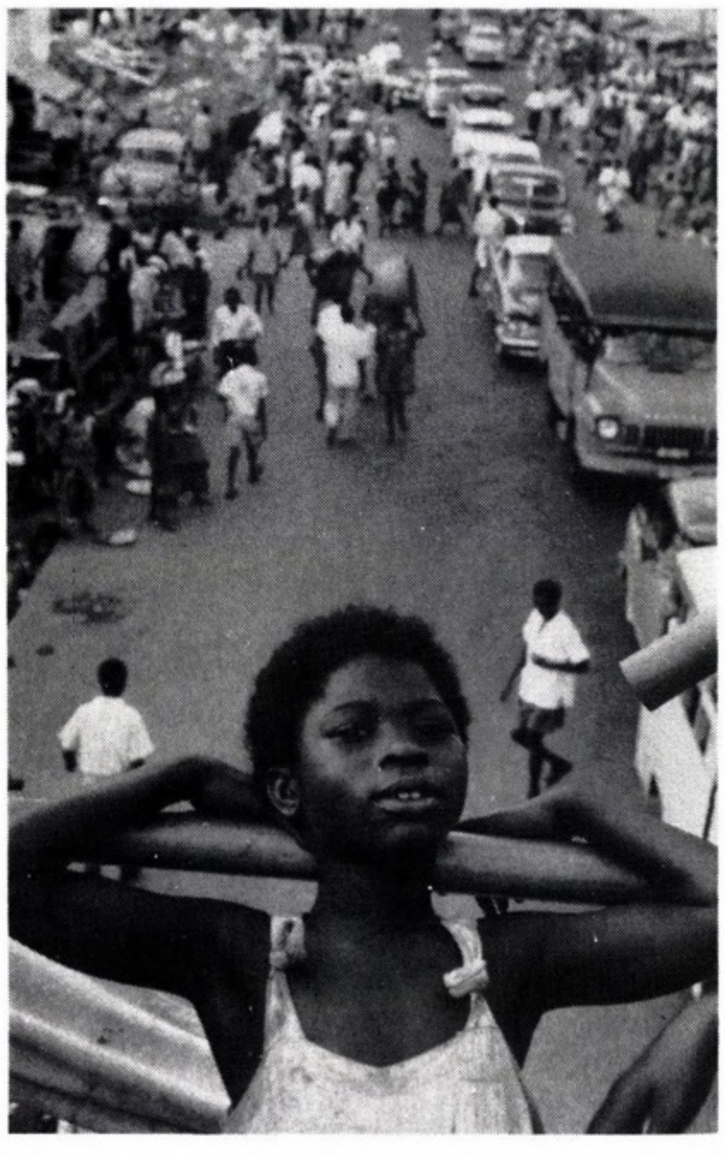
married girls are not normally catered for, exceptions are made. Many of the teachers are women: parents in Bangladesh frequently keep their daughters away from school if teachers are male. And each BRAC school is situated right in the community: if schools are far away parents will not let girls attend. It is not acceptable for girls – especially those past puberty – to walk about the countryside in this devout Muslim country.

'I am fortunate to be here,' says Razia, looking round the schoolroom with its tin roof and walls of bamboo and mud. She had to fight to come, though. Her father believes that a woman's place is at home. 'Had I been a boy,' she said, 'my father would surely have allowed me to study.'

Razia's own mother was married at 12 and, like her oldest daughter, had no say in the matter. 'I want my sisters' lives to be different. They should study and be given a choice about their marriage. Husbands will not dare to treat an educated woman badly.' On this subject, Razia becomes quite animated.

Razia would like to go on with her studies after she has completed the BRAC course. During the two-and-a-half hour daily session – which is timetabled to fit in with seasonal work and religious obligations – she learns literacy and numeracy, as well as enjoying activities such as singing, dancing, games and storybook reading.

BRAC have had a remarkable success in keeping the drop-out rate from their schools to five per cent and graduating 90 per cent of their students into the formal primary system. This proves that the obstacles to girls' education – even in such a poor environment – can be overcome.



MARC RIBOUD / MAGNUM

As for Razia, her experience of life has forced her to question many things she once took for granted – such as the need to get married. She does not wish to marry again. And many other girls have begun to question the restrictions imposed on them. More of them want to be teachers – like their own teacher – or doctors. Razia says: 'I tell my sisters to study well and get a job. If they get a job they will be able to do as well as men and men will respect them.'

ACCRA, GHANA

No Ghanaian schoolgirl was ever admitted to a secondary technical school before 1987. Now scores are enrolling – for courses in welding, carpentry, masonry and technical drawing.

'This is a big change from the past,' says Sara Opong, Director of Basic Education. She points to the changes in the curriculum which made it possible. 'Our students left school with academic qualifications only, unfit for practical work. We didn't have enough skilled middle-level workers.' So a technical component was introduced for all students – not just the boys.

Today, there is agriculture and welding for everyone in the three years they spend completing their 'basic' education. Also life skills such as art, sewing and cooking. 'Formerly, when the timetable said needlework,' said Opong, 'the boys went off to woodcraft. Now that's finished.' Opong has on her office wall a beautiful piece of embroidery made by a boy student.

For the girls, new opportunities have opened up. 'The chance to do what were formerly boys' subjects has raised morale tremendously,' says Opong. 'We told the technical schools that they had to admit girls and today girls are taking technical prizes all over the country.'

But before girls can get this far they have to have had a primary education. That's not so common in northern Ghana where only one or two in every 20 make it through the full six primary years. Poverty and distance from schools are the main reasons, explains SY Manu, co-ordinator of a project to tackle the problem.

'We give needy girls scholarships,' he said. 'Each girl receives enough money for basics – a uniform, text books and stationery. And we don't decide which girls are eligible. The community decides.' At present only around 360 girls are involved, but rapid expansion is planned.

For it seems to be working. Enrolment rates are up by around one-third. Manu is encouraged: 'We may end up attracting more girls to school than we can cater for.' And the involvement of the community has been vital in helping parents understand the importance of educating their daughters.

Some people object though – saying that boys should receive scholarships too. The logic of 'positive action' – or bias in favour of girls – has yet to be appreciated in some quarters ...

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS

Every weekday at noon much of Barbados comes to a stop when an American soap – *The Bold and the Beautiful* – plays on national television.

A group of teenage mums watch the show during their lunch break at a counselling and skills training centre run by PAREDOS – or Parent Education for Development in Barbados. Kathy, Julia, and Nicole are devotees of the show. On screen, beautiful blonde Brook plots to trap bold, handsome, wealthy Ridge into marriage by getting pregnant. The girls are riveted – but the storyline is a far cry from their own.

'I never want to marry,' says Kathy.

'You can't rely on a man,' says Julia. 'They don't want to be tied down.'

'It's true,' says Nicole. 'The men want to be free to go out to fetes (dances). They don't want to be home with the baby.'

Nicole, aged 16 with a baby son of two months, is the youngest present. She lives with her mother – a maid – and her mason brother. Nicole first had sex at 14. This is not unusual. A third of Barbados school children between 10 and 16 are sexually active, according to a recent survey. But Nicole and the others hoot with derision over the survey's findings.

'That number is too small! Nobody tell them people the truth. They come around and ask you but you don't want to say. There is at least half of them doing it, everyone is doing it!'

The result of 'everyone doing it' is a high rate of teenage pregnancy. The girls say that 'half the girls in my class' get pregnant. 'The ones that didn't yet are just plain lucky,' says Kathy. All the girls knew about contraception but none used it until after their baby was born. All became pregnant in the school holidays. Kathy jokes: 'If we had school all year no-one get pregnant!' For her, school is the best contraceptive.

The condoms and spermicides promoted for family planning are disliked by Barbados people. According to PAREDOS Director Marva Springer, abortion is the only form of 'contraception' teenagers use. At Queen Elizabeth Hospital pregnant girls aged 12 or 13 get priority for abortions – as long as they really want them. Among older teens, abortion is harder to obtain, but Springer says there are ways.

Yet teenage motherhood is common. As elsewhere in the Caribbean 20 per cent of infants are born to teens. And a very high proportion of births – 80 per cent on St. Lucia, for example – take place outside marriage. 'There's no shame in having a child,' says Nicole. 'Anyone who is having

MICHAEL ANN MULLEN / FORMAT

Caribbean schoolgirls say: 'Everyone is doing it!' (*above*)
Dreaming among the Accra traffic (*opposite*)

sex can have a child.'

Nicole's own mother had her first child when she was a teenager. The same is true of all the others. And none of their mothers live with their fathers, although some fathers give financial support. Julia's father works in the construction business in New York. She doesn't see him but he does send money – sometimes.

Over 40 per cent of households in Barbados are headed by women who act as providers and decision-makers while receiving occasional visits from male sexual partners. Nicole follows the same tradition, maintaining a relationship with the 23-year-old father of her baby – who does pay up – while living with her mother.

The divided West Indian family is laid at the door of 300 years of history during which lasting unions between men and women of African descent were systematically destroyed. Women learned to depend not on men but on each other, especially on mothers and sisters, as do these girls.

But doesn't early motherhood ruin their chances of doing well? Nicole wanted to go back to school after her baby was born but state secondary schools do not accept students over 16. She wants to learn a skill, though, and get a good job. She comes here to the centre and attends evening classes at the polytechnic. Her mother and other family members help out with the baby.

Julia – whose mother is also a maid – used to have ambitions. She stayed at school until she was six months pregnant and then returned to take her matriculation exams. 'Before I had the baby I wanted to be an accountant or engineer.' Now she is doubtful. She may just make it, with the help of the PAREDOS training.

But many teenage mums slip through the net. PAREDOS reaches about 20 per cent. Some can't afford the bus fare into town. Marva Springer says the problems really begin when the girls get pregnant for the second or third time, when they find themselves at 20 with no training and two dependent children. Unemployment is rising since Barbados entered an IMF-inspired restructuring phase a year ago.

Apart from the health risks faced by very young mothers, early motherhood may be helping to perpetuate the cycle which absents fathers from home. This is beginning to be associated not with the down-trodden condition of girls but with the under-achievement of boys. Recent Caribbean surveys show that girls are performing better at school and entering the job market with better qualifications. Lack of male role models in the home is blamed. Rising crime and drug abuse – both young male activities – are also blamed on fathers' lack of involvement in family life.

The struggle between the sexes is taking place not only in the workplace but in the home – and at home the men are losing. The threat of AIDS also means that the days of the free-wheeling sexual style of West Indian men may be numbered. The AIDS Awareness Committee is reporting a drop in sexual activity among Barbadian school children. Nicole says that none of her friends ever talked about AIDS but it's different now. 'You got to be careful.'

Even though steady partnership seems like good self-protection, Nicole is not interested in settling down with her baby's father. 'I don't know about him. You can't tell what will happen.' It's easier to live the way she was brought up, with her mother.

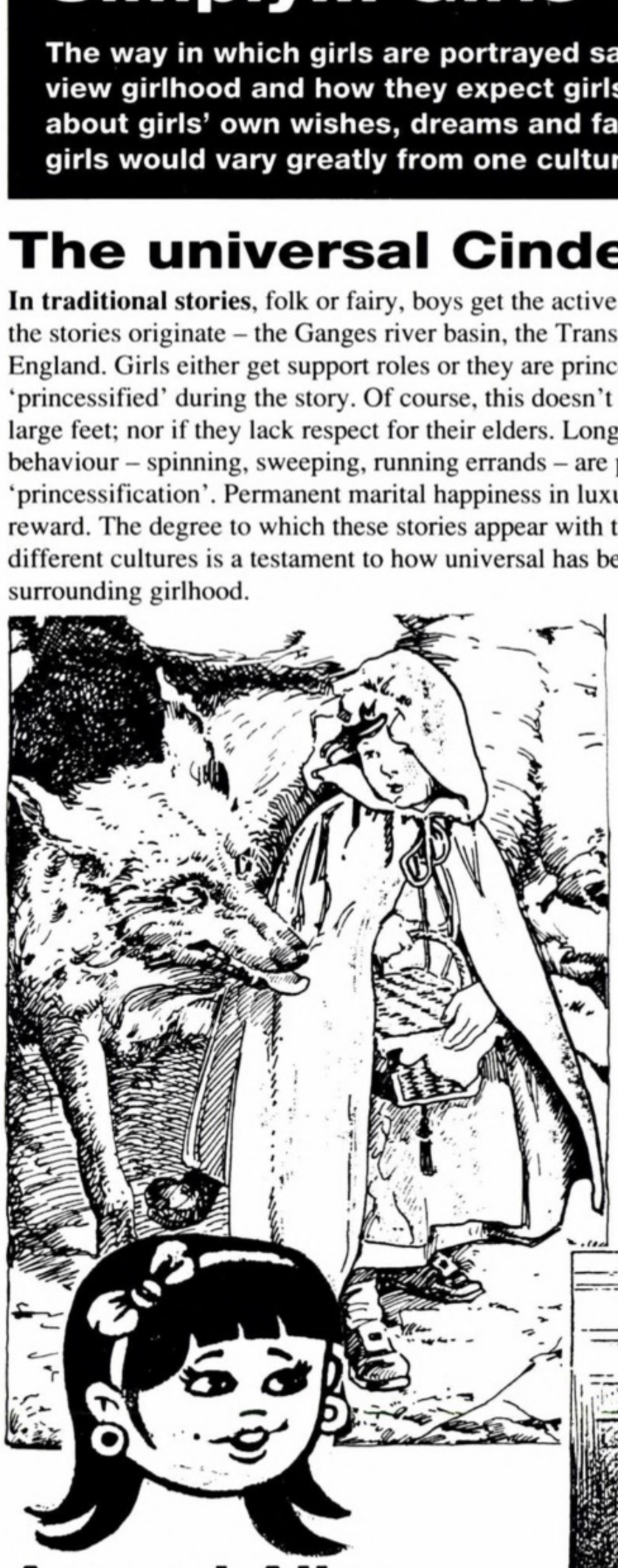
For the teenage mums of Barbados the prospect of a happy settled dependent married life is remote. Trapping a man into marriage and security by becoming pregnant is a nonsensical idea. But Julia, Kathy and Nicole are swept up by those imaginary relationships, glued to *The Bold and the Beautiful...* ■

Simply... Girls – the fiction, the fantasy

The way in which girls are portrayed says a lot about how particular societies view girlhood and how they expect girls to behave. It also says something about girls' own wishes, dreams and fantasies. You might think the portrayal of girls would vary greatly from one culture to the next. You might be wrong...

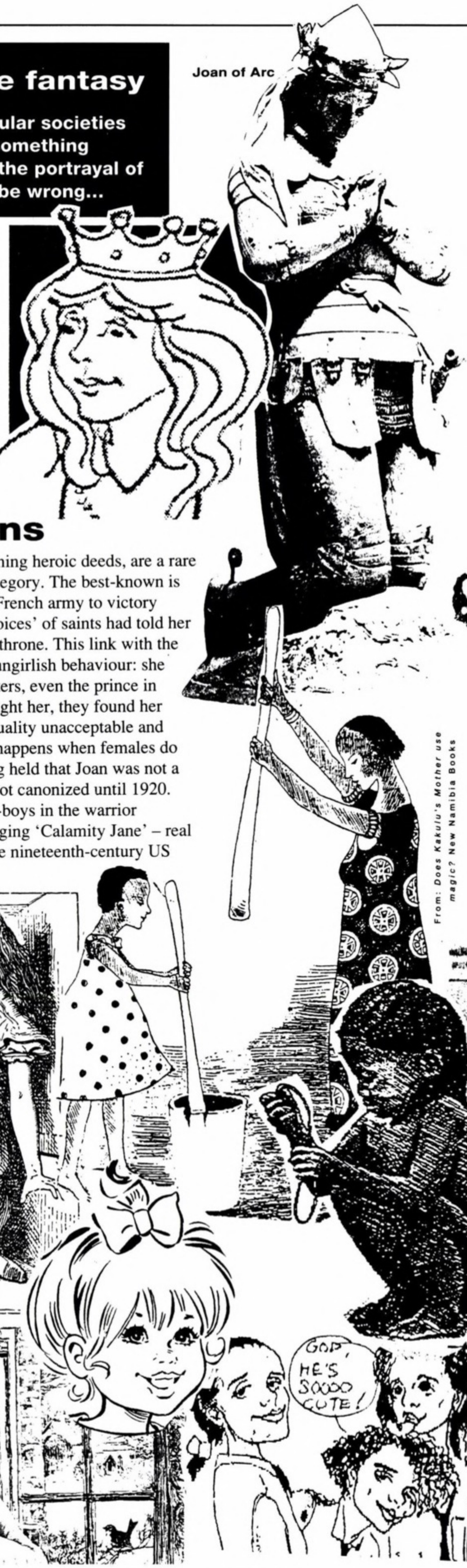
The universal Cinderella

In traditional stories, folk or fairy, boys get the active roles. It does not matter where the stories originate – the Ganges river basin, the Transylvanian woods, or the vales of England. Girls either get support roles or they are princesses, often becoming 'princessified' during the story. Of course, this doesn't happen if they are ugly or have large feet; nor if they lack respect for their elders. Long fair hair and smilingly dutiful behaviour – spinning, sweeping, running errands – are preconditions of 'princessification'. Permanent marital happiness in luxurious surroundings is the reward. The degree to which these stories appear with the same basic ingredients in different cultures is a testament to how universal has been the value system surrounding girlhood.



Heroes and amazons

Girls dressed as boys, performing heroic deeds, are a rare but recognizable 'girl hero' category. The best-known is Joan of Arc who at 17 led the French army to victory against the British in 1429. 'Voices' of saints had told her to put the 'right' prince on the throne. This link with the immortal helped condone her ungirlish behaviour: she constantly argued with her betters, even the prince in question. When the British caught her, they found her 'voices' and apparent transsexuality unacceptable and burnt her as a witch. As often happens when females do well in male roles, rumour long held that Joan was not a proper girl at all and she was not canonized until 1920. There have been other girls-as-boys in the warrior tradition: for example gun-slinging 'Calamity Jane' – real name Martha Bank – of the late nineteenth-century US 'Wild West'.



Amoral Alice

In most cultures keepers of the childish mind long upheld that stories told to a child must have a moral purpose. In the oral African tradition, where animals predominate the tortoise is cunning (and often female), the leopard strong (inevitably male), the snake evil (either), and all get their just deserts. In Britain, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* was the first children's book to throw such ideas down the rabbit-hole. 'It has no moral and does not teach anything', remarked a contemporary in astonishment. Alice's adventures are unconnected to merit or misbehaviour and Carroll even uses his own nonsensical conventions to mock the moral tale. The Duchess of Wonderland pursues morals in absurd places: 'Tut, tut, child!' she tells Alice, 'Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it!' Many modern commentators on children's literature echo her: 'Everything's got a gender conditioner, if only you can find it.'

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Doing and daring

In African, Arabian and Amerindian stories, many heroic deeds belong to the hunting and monster-slaying department. The footprints of girls are very rare here. If they appear at all, girls mind the hearth, prepare the potions, sing songs, and run errands. In the West girls have long been claiming to be 'as good as boys any day', even in feats of derring-do. When the Girl Guides were set up in 1910 they adopted – somewhat scandalously – almost the same syllabus as the Boy Scouts and called their handbook: *How Girls can help the Empire*. Their real-life heroes included women such as aviator Amy Johnson who flew solo to Australia in 1930. Interestingly, Amy Johnson's earliest ambition, at the age of three, was to be a queen – not, you will note, a princess.

From: Katy's Kit Car by Robin Laurie © 1987, Hamish Hamilton.

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Saintly sisters

The devotional self-sacrificial role of saint – unlike that of priest – has never been denied to girls. Saint Teresa of Avila first gave herself to God when she set out to seek martyrdom in Morocco at the age of six. Mother Teresa of Calcutta took her vows at the age of 12. Bernadette of Lourdes saw her Lady and found her spring at 14. Among earlier, less famous holy girls Saint Lucy, Saint Etheldreda, Saint Dorothy – there is a common theme of refusing to marry. This led to martyrdom or, later, to the preferable alternative of a nunnery. Nuns are often projected as princesses – smiling, dutiful, gentle, good who reject the mortal prince, becoming instead 'brides of Christ' and ending up in a similar state of perpetual felicity but in much less comfortable surroundings.

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

The educated ms

Originally education for girls helped them fill their roles as subservient women more efficiently. As the scope for girls' improvement widened, a few managed careers as writers: Jane Austen began only just beyond girlhood, as did the Bronte sisters. Then came girls' literature: *Little Women, The Girl's Own Paper*. In a class by itself is *The Diary of Anne Frank*; Anne's fate puts her in the girl saint or hero class. Once it was accepted that girls had the same intellectual capacity as boys, the call was for equality. In time this ushered in new images of a determinedly gender-free – or cross-gender – childhood. Prize-winning books in the North now have titles like *Bill's New Frock* and *The Karate Princess*. In the South, most stories are still in the *Mustapha and the Princess* and *Ogilo and the Hippo* mould. But from Namibia comes *Mandi's Wheels* about a girl with a car ...

Sources: *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, by Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard. The African Books Collective. The George McBean collection of children's illustrations.

ACTION

Organizations which focus on the situation of girls tend to be those concerned with programmes for children and youth, or with children's rights, or with women's rights.

Save the Children Fund
Autonomous national bodies in an international federation fund-raise and run projects for children, in their own countries and elsewhere.
Aotearoa (NZ): 72-75 Taranaki Street, Wellington
Australia: 56 Johnston St, Collingwood 3066, Victoria.
Canada: 3080 Yonge St, Toronto, Ont. M4N 3P4
UK: 17 Groveland, Camberwell, London, SE5 8RD

YWCA
An international movement with branches at national and local level throughout the world.
International HQ: World YWCA, 37 Quai Wilson, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland

UNICEF
Has national fund-raising and advocacy committees in many countries including Australia, Canada, UK, and US. It's the most active international organization specifically working on behalf of 'the girl child'.
International HQ: 3 UN Plaza, New York 10017

Childhope
An international alliance set up to respond to the needs of street and working children.
Canada: 5151 Mcdonald Avenue, Montreal
UK: 40 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RN
US: 331 E 38, New York 10016

Defence for Children International
A campaigning organization on children's rights with useful documentation and resource services.
Canada: PO Box 400, Postal Station F, Toronto M4Y 2L7
US: 21 South 13 St, Philadelphia PA 17107
Switzerland: PO Box 88, Ch-1211 Geneva 20

Inter-Africa Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC)
Works to end female genital mutilation by advocacy and programmes, through African member associations.
Switzerland: 147 Rue de Lausanne, 1202, Geneva

Jubilee Campaign
A human rights group campaigning against child exploitation in the Philippines.
UK: Box 80, Cobham, Surrey KT11 2 BQ
US: 7002-C-Little River Turnpike, Annadale, Va 22003

ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism)
A coalition of NGOs and religious organizations with national committees in Australia, Aotearoa (NZ) and elsewhere.
International HQ: PO Box 178, Klong-chan, Bangkok 10240, Thailand

Christian World Service
Supports projects in the South concerned with girls.
Aotearoa (NZ): PO Box 22-652, Christchurch

Community Aid Abroad
Undertakes advocacy and fund-raising for girls' and women's issues in the South.
Australia: 75 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065

MATCH International Centre
Works with women's groups in the South to promote a feminist vision of development.
Canada: 200 Elgin Street, STE 1102, Ottawa, Ont. K2P 1L5

Womankind
Supports projects affecting girls and women in the South.
UK: 122 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7PT

ILLUSTRATION : JACKY FLEMING

Change
Advocates the inclusion of gender issues in development planning and policy-making and undertakes studies and publications on women.
UK: PO Box 824, London SE24 9JS

Anti-Slavery International
Concerned with rights issues, including those of children in domestic slavery and servile forms of marriage.
UK: 180 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AT

Foundation for Women's Health (FORWARD)
Campaigns to eliminate genital mutilation, primarily among immigrant groups in Britain.
UK: 138 King Street, London WC2E 8JT

Children's Defense Fund
Advocacy and research on the rights of children in the US
US: 122 C Street NW, Washington DC 20001

International Catholic Child Bureau
Undertakes data-gathering and advocacy projects on children in difficult circumstances, notably girls in prostitution.
Switzerland: 65 rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva

Worth Reading on Girls

The best summary of gender and development in childhood is ***The Girl Child*** (UNICEF). Much literature is now produced on 'children in especially difficult circumstances' but the gender angle is often weak. Among the most interesting are ***Broken Promise*** by Annie Allsebrook and Anthony Swift (Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), ***The Next Generation*** by Judith Ennew and Brian Milne (Zed Books, 1989), ***Child Labour*** by Alec Fyfe (Polity Press, 1989), ***Child Slaves*** by Peter Lee-Wright (Earthscan, 1990), and UNICEF's ***Innocenti*** series on urban children in difficult circumstances in the Philippines, Brazil, Italy, India, and Kenya.

On female genital mutilation see ***Female Genital Mutilation: Proposals for Change*** by Efua Dorkenoo and Scilla Elworthy (Minority Rights Group, 1992). On education, ***Women and Literacy*** by Marcela Ballara (Zed Books, 1992) and ***Strategies to Promote Girls' Education*** (UNICEF, 1992). On the US educational gender gap: ***How Schools Shortchange Girls***, The AAUW Educational Foundation.

Still one of the most powerful feminist analyses of girlhood is contained in ***The Second Sex*** by Simone de Beauvoir (Jonathon Cape, 1954). An important study of upbringing is ***Little Girls*** by Elena Gianini Belotti (Writers and Readers Co-operative, 1975). For a day-to-day description of very early social conditioning, ***There's a good girl*** by Marianne Grabrucker (The Women's Press, 1988). ***What is a child?*** by Patricia Holland (Virago, 1992) analyzes images of childhood and how they reveal changing perceptions.

The young girl can also be approached from the perspective of studies of the family and its history: ***The Family*** by William J Goode (Prentice-Hall, 1982) and ***The Family in Question*** by Diana Gittins (Macmillan, 1985).

On the culture of girlhood see ***Schoolgirl Fictions*** by Valerie Walkerdine (Verso, 1991) ***Feminism and Youth Culture*** by Angela McRobbie, (Macmillan, 1991), and ***A child in the city*** by Colin Ward, (Bedford Square Press, 1990). A primer covering considerable ground is the collection of abstracts from the ***Alice in Wonderland*** Conference, from Marion de Ras, Free University, de Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam. An excellent teaching pack: ***Class, gender and race inequality*** by Focus for Change, 103 London St, Reading, Berkshire, UK.

Finally, fiction: ***Cat's Eye*** by Margaret Atwood (Doubleday and Bantam, 1989) on the vicissitudes of girlhood, ***Truth, Dare and Promise: Girls Growing up in the Fifties*** edited by Liz Heron (Virago, 1985); Alice Walker's ***Possessing the secret of joy*** (Jonathon Cape, 1992) on the cultural dilemmas of genital mutilation; and ***Sacred Country*** by Rose Tremain (Siclair-Stevenson, 1992) about a girl growing up who thinks she's a boy.

BURMA/MYANMAR

Burmese civil war

Ethnic minorities targeted

In 1988 the unrest in Burma came alive on TV screens worldwide. We saw the spectacle of the people's protest against decades of military tyranny. We did not see much of the killing of thousands of protesters that followed. A new military front was established then, called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Their aim is to eradicate those who resisted them.

The country is under siege with many ethnic and political groups suffering under SLORC's brand of ethnic cleansing. SLORC has its gun sights set particularly on Manerplaw, a town in Karen state bordering Thailand, because it is the headquarters of the Karen people as well as several other ethnic and political groups. Chief among them is the National League for Democracy.

BURMA ACTION GROUP

Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi.

In 1990 SLORC had organized general elections confident of winning, but the landslide majority went to the League. The military then crushed the League, placing president-elect and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. The remaining NLD leaders were killed, jailed or fled to Manerplaw where they have established a parallel government.

To wipe out Manerplaw, SLORC has launched four dry-season offensives since 1988. The dry- season begins in January and lasts until the rain comes in May, making fighting impossible. Last year's offensive was the worst.

New and deadlier weapons were wielded indiscriminately against civilian and rebel targets in air strikes. Ground forces swept through the jungle destroying villages on the way to Manerplaw. Thousands of civilians fled ahead of the advancing troops. But many were captured and either tortured, shot or forced to act as human shields to deter attacks and to clear mines as they walked at gunpoint ahead of the soldiers. Tens of thousands of refugees found relative safety behind Karen lines but suffered starvation and sickness as they sat out the air strikes.

Before launching the government offensive, military commanders were in desperate need of people to carry tons of war material from supply bases to the advancing troops. They swooped on thousands of civilians, yanking them out of homes and off the buses and streets, recruiting them forcibly as 'volunteers'.

Around 20,000 found themselves slogging through the hot jungle carrying 20-kilo packs up steep mountain paths while troops beat and drove them on. Those who dropped from exhaustion were either left to die or shot where they lay. The women were subjected to repeated rapes.

One gaunt 60-year-old porter said, 'It was terrible. I'm an old man but they forced me to work hard every day with no food. I survived by eating insects and bamboo shoots. I managed to escape to the Karen.'

The high death toll among porters forced SLORC to undertake a large-scale recruitment drive. waited in fear. Prisons were emptied and the inmates sent to the jungle to die working as porters or human minesweepers.

The battle for Manerplaw ended in May 1992 with the coming of the monsoon. But now the dry season is back. ■

Kurt Hanson
(Kurt Hanson recently spent several months in Burma researching the civil war.)

Gay takes on the Pentagon

If you are out of the closet, you are out of the military. For 50 years, that had been the firm rule of the US Pentagon. But the day after Veterans Day, following a prolonged courtroom battle, Petty Officer Meinhold regained his job at a Naval Air Station in California. Employed for 12 years by the service, he had been sacked in August after announcing that he was gay on national TV. When the US District Judge ordered the Navy to take back Meinhold, the service refused. When the judge reaffirmed his decision declaring 'This is not a military dictatorship', Washington's Acting Secretary of the Navy decided to comply.

The reinstatement is only temporary, pending the legal result of Meinhold's wider challenge to the Pentagon's ban on gays. But such legal battles may not be necessary. President-elect Clinton has pledged to end the military ban.

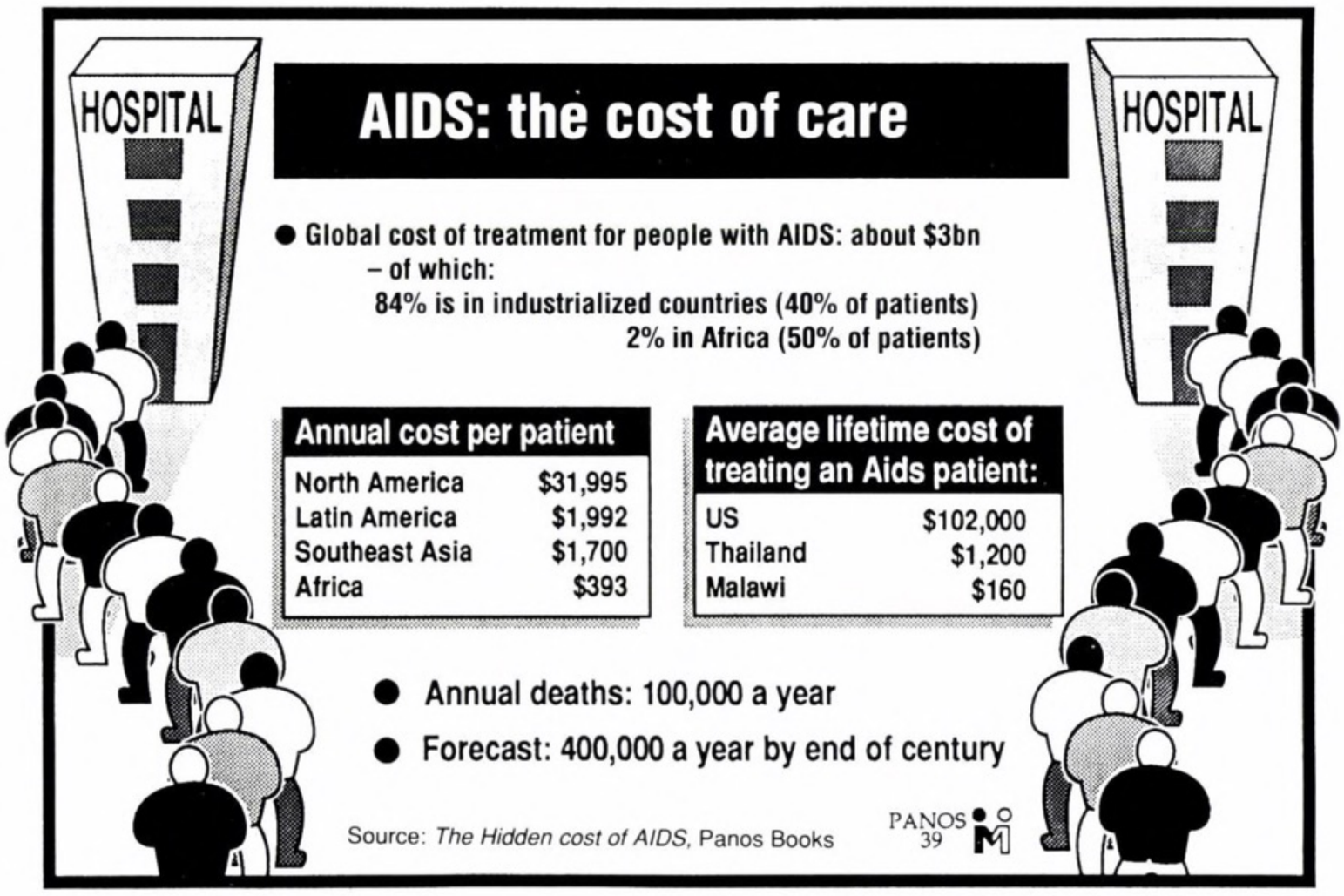
From: Time No 47, 1992

The Imelda Marcos tease

Trying to unlock the Philippines' public funds that have been salted away by former president Ferdinand Marcos, and now in the custody of Imelda his wife, is a long and complicated affair. On 5 November, Imelda Marcos' lawyer said that she was offering to withdraw $356 million currently frozen in Swiss bank accounts and put the money in a public foundation for the poor of Manila. Presumably this was if the Government dropped its numerous charges related to the Marcos financial dealings.

But then Imelda withdrew the offer two days later. And the Presidential Commission on Good Government, which claims the Marcos family plundered five billion dollars while in power, subsequently rejected any offer of the deal.

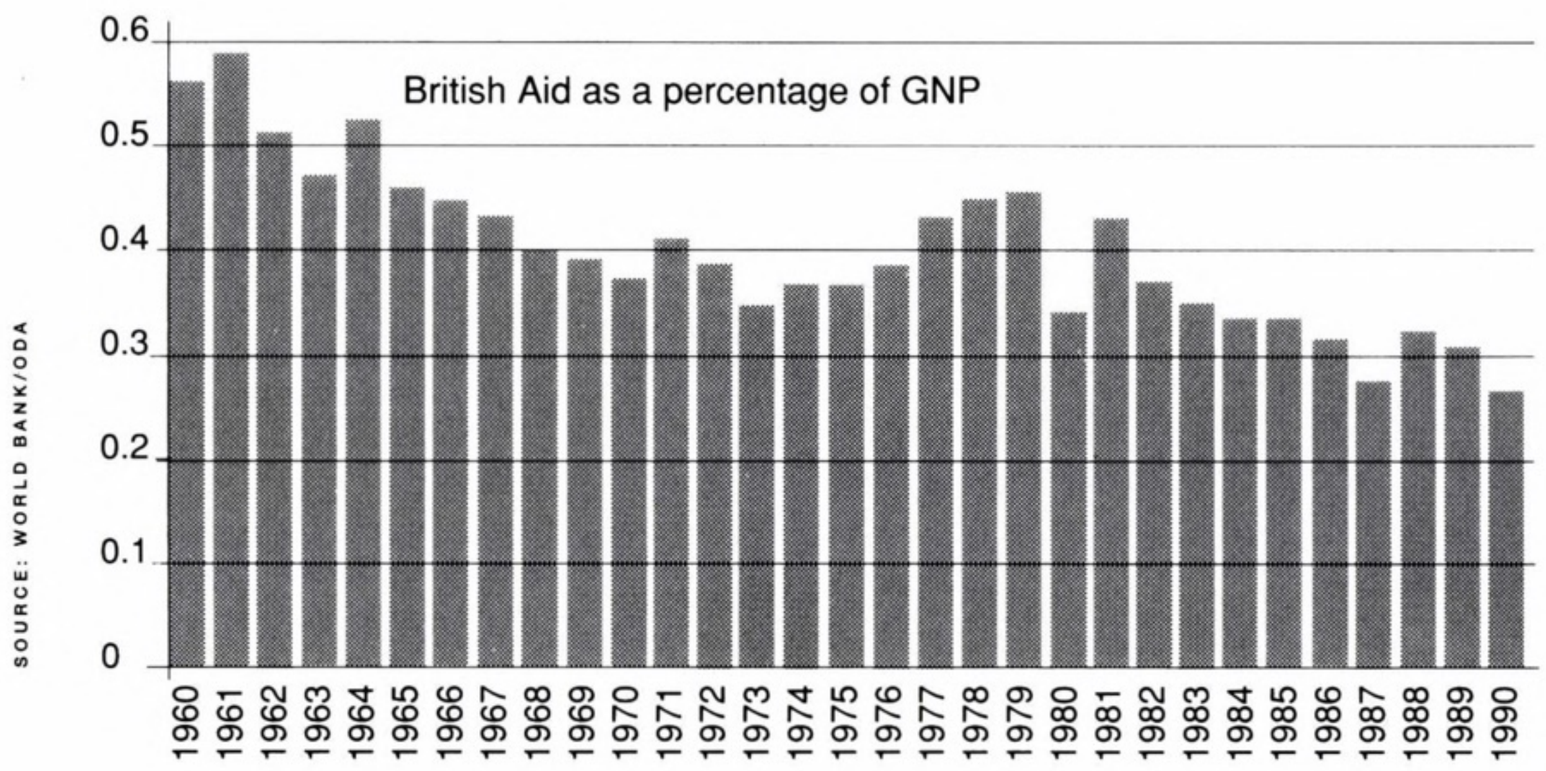
From: Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 155, No 46, 1992



OVERSEAS AID

The fall and fall of British aid

Scrooge economics



SOURCE: WORLD BANK/ODA

A LANDMARK for British relationships with the Third World in 1990 was the record inflow of £6,847 million ($10,612 million) from repayments on previous debts by developing countries. It meant a net inflow of funds from the poor world after overseas aid and investments had been deducted of £2,600 million ($4,030 million). This was the first time for the UK that repayments on past loans exceeded official aid and new loans.

As a percentage of gross national product, Britain has halved its aid to developing countries in the last 30 years. In 1960 the British government gave 0.56 per cent of GNP in development aid; in 1990 it gave 0.27 per cent. In both years a Conservative government was in power. Between 1960 and 1990 the standard of living measured in terms of GNP per head roughly doubled.

Since Conservative government resumed in 1979, British aid has fallen sharply – by a third. However it also fell under the Labour administration of 1964-1970 from 0.53 per cent to 0.37 per cent. Nevertheless the Socialists deserve half a bouquet. For when Labour was in office from 1974 to 1979, at a time of great economic crisis, aid rose from 0.37 per cent to 0.45 per cent.

As for the future, British government aid plans announced in November 1992 project a slight increase from £1,835 million ($2,845 million) for 1992/3 to £1,900 million ($3,515 million) for 1993/4. It will then be frozen for the next two years. In case anyone needs reminding, the pledge given by all donor countries including Britain at the Rio Summit in June 1992 was to reach the UN aid target of 0.7 per cent of GNP 'as soon as possible'. ■

International Agricultural Development, Vol 12, No 6 1992

Available from : 19 Woodford Close, Caversham, Reading, Berks. RG4 7HN, UK.

CARTOON : LEN MUNNIK

Rampant disease and the bed net

Wars are good for business, particularly the pharmaceutical business. Nowhere is this more evident than with malaria drugs. Only when it threatened Western troops, did a search for a prophylactic become a priority. Until the 1940s there was only quinine. The Second World War spawned two new drugs and the Vietnam War two more. Now these drugs are becoming defunct, overtaken by the rapid spread of drug-resistant malaria parasites. The pharmaceutical companies, hard-headed animals of the free market system, see little profit in a market confined to the nations of the South. So they have all but abandoned research into the disease.

Instead a simple solution is being proposed – the humble bed net, soaked once a year in pyrethroid insecticide and put over the bed every night. Evidence from The Gambia has shown that treated bed nets could cut the death rate from malaria by 70 per cent – this for a measure that costs 50 cents a season and requires little specialized training.

From New Scientist, Vol 136, No 1845 1992

Kidnapping legality

A recent United States Supreme Court decision permits US agents to kidnap foreigners on foreign soil and bring them to the US for trial. Politicians, lawyers and jurists from Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Venezuela have expressed outrage and concern over the ruling. And the chorus of condemnation is spreading.

The ruling involves a Mexican doctor, Humberto Alvarez Machain, accused of participating in the torture and murder of a US Drug Enforcement Agency official stationed in Mexico. Mexico has consistently objected to the abduction and asked for Machain's return.

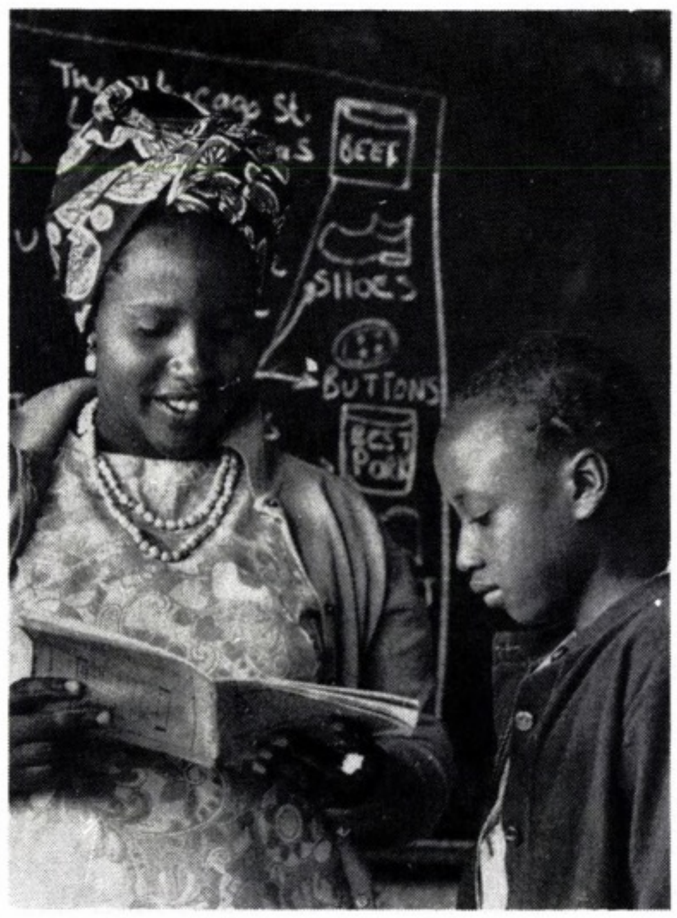
At the heart of the case is the question of whether or not the abduction is a violation of international law and existing extradition treaties. The Supreme Court ruled it was not but most observers disagree.

While the US-Mexico extradition treaty does not specifically prohibit kidnapping, Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens pointed out that nor does the treaty specifically prohibit murder and torture, but this does not grant the US permission to kill or torture.

Inter Press Service/ Third World Network

Starved for books

In 1989 Tanzania's official literacy rate was put at 92 per cent, totalling 15 million adults. But now there is danger of it dropping because there is an acute shortage of books. Charles Kabeho, Minister for Education and Culture, is urging Tanzanians to write books to end the dearth, but there are few takers because the country's biggest publishing house (which is government owned) takes years to publish a book.



MARION KAPLAN / CAMERA PRESS

The shortage is so serious in schools, colleges and universities that President Ali Hassan Mwinyi has told people holding textbooks to surrender them to nearby schools or police stations. 'If you are found with any school book, you will be taken to court,' he warned.

Herald Tagama, Dar es Salaam/Gemini

THE AMAZON

Last chance

Notorious Indian agency tries to reform

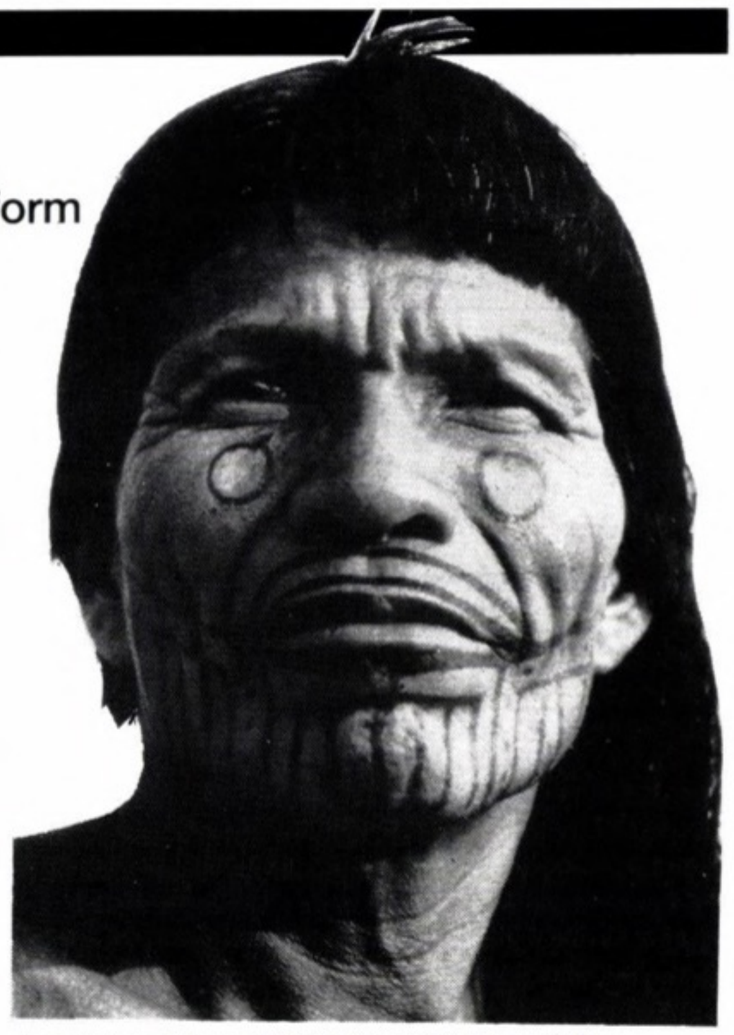
MAJOR changes are being proposed to the way Brazil treats its indigenous peoples. There is growing support for an end to the constitutional requirement that the state should represent the Indians. This requirement, its opponents argue, is paternalistic. It undermines fundamental Indian human rights and the legitimacy of their own organizations.

One of the legacies of the state representation of Indians is the *Fundacão Nacional do Indio* (FUNAI), the Brazilian agency charged with responsibility for the Indian peoples. It has a notorious history of corruption, betrayal of Indian interests, control by the military and even complicity in genocide.

Nonetheless it does have the legal power to intervene against powerful logging, mining and ranching interests that are envious of the resources on Indian lands. There is genuine concern that if FUNAI were dissolved and the Indian peoples were left to their own devices, they wouldn't stand a chance in the violent reality of contemporary Brazil.

The argument to retain FUNAI has been strengthened by the appointment of Sydney Ferreira Possuelo to head the agency. With a long and respected track record as an 'Indianist' working with uncontacted groups, Possuelo has cleaned the military out of FUNAI. He personally took charge of continuing negotiations to remove illegal settlers from the lands of the Guajajara Indians in the Amazonian state of Maranhão.

Possuelo's main problem is that he has no money. FUNAI's budget has been cut by 90 per cent: the lifts in its Brasília offices don't work and the phones have been cut off because the bills have not been paid. Visiting the UK recently Possuelo was looking for $500,000 ('Not the money – just the engines') for three Pilotus planes, manufactured on the Isle of Wight, which are currently grounded and can no longer deliver urgently-needed medical supplies to communities in the rainforest.



DOUGLAS BOTTING / CAMERA PRESS

Looking ahead into the future of the Amazon's indigenous poeple.

The situation of Brazil's Indian peoples is increasingly critical. Despite all the international furore and the official designation of an Indigenous Park for the Yanomami people in northern Brazil, between 3,000 and 5,000 *garimpeiros* (gold prospectors) remain within the Park. Malaria continues to decimate the Yanomami population, despite a Health Ministry programme supported by FUNAI.

Possuelo sees FUNAI as 'a fishbone in the throat' (thorn in the side) of the Brazilian establishment. Unusually he favours allowing still-uncontacted groups to remain undisturbed. How the Indians fare, he says, depends upon what happens to Brazil: 'If Brazil is in trouble, the Indians are the first to suffer'. It is now his job to put this right. It could be the last chance for FUNAI to salvage its lamentable historical record – and the future of the Indian peoples over whom it has power. ■

David Ransom / Alex Shankland

Zimbabwe's wet, wet, wet

Well, not quite. But given the NI lead update story in October 1992 reporting on the drought in Southern Africa we thought readers should know it has started raining in Zimbabwe. The heaviest rains so far have been around Bulawayo – a blessing as the country's second-biggest city was almost out of water and citizens were talking of evacuation. But the good soaking needs to continue.

The normal rainy season lasts from November to March. In 1991 it began quite well too, but then dried up. A good few weeks rain are needed to restore the dams and the rivers. But the parched economy will take longer to recover.

More than 20 per cent of public spending this year has gone on drought relief, and with real gross domestic product down by 5 per cent, tax income is being squeezed.

Harare did manage to get emergency food supplies to most rural areas. And it has sharply raised producer prices for every crop next year, encouraging all but the worst-hit farmers to plant ahead. But the big saving that still has to be made is government spending on the civil service and the army. For relative to population, Zimbabwe's army is 2.5 times bigger than Britain's. True the country has been surrounded by conflict in the last decade, but the Southern Africa cone is looking a lot less violent these days. Unfortunately making soldiers redundant might be a nettle too uncomfortable to grasp.

From information supplied.

END

END Quote Quote

"You can't imagine just how proud I feel to be a descendant, a granddaughter of the Mayan people. Equally I could be a grandchild of the Aztec people, the Inca people, the Arawa people, or any of the peoples who lived in the Old Continent where I was born. Particularly because here, at the end of the twentieth century, there are many who think that we indigenous people are just a myth, a relic belonging to some time in the past. Sadly, there are very few people in the world who really understand and accept that indigenous people are alive and well, a living people moving towards the future."

Rigoberta Menchu,
1992 Guatemalan Nobel Prize Winner

Hairy Spuds

A potato's best defence is its hair, according to researchers at the International Potato Institute in Lima, Peru. The centre is testing a new variety of hairy potato that fends off aphids, moths and the Colorado beetle.

The hairs are tipped by tiny sacs filled with a substance that sticks to any insect that alights on the leaf. Small insects stick to the leaf and starve; larger ones that ingest the 'glue' develop severe constipation.

Researchers at Cornell University in New York have crossed wild varieties of hairy potatoes with commercial high-yielding varieties. The hybrids are being tested in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

From New Scientist, Vol 136, No 1845, 1992

ILLUSTRATION : STEVE WESTON

Apartheid: The Musical. Whoopi Goldberg & Co making a song and dance of the Soweto Uprising.

film

Sarafina!

directed by **Darrell James Roodt**

The idea of a big-budget musical about apartheid may seem like an absurd joke but Sarafina! is an altogether plausible venture, even though its blend of politics and high-stepping doesn't quite gell. It had its roots in a stage musical by actor/musician/writer Mbongeni Ngema that was massively successful in the US a couple of years ago; and it has its rationale in the tight associations in South Africa between political resistance and music. There's a clash between the township jive dance routines and the hard realism favoured by director Roodt – he's too much of a documentary film-maker to help the hoofing catch fire – but there's also a sense of conviction, especially in the acting, that really comes across.

Sarafina! is set in Soweto (where it was shot) at the time of the 1976 state of emergency when schoolchildren were being massacred by troops. Sarafina is the name of a teenage girl, played by Leleti Khumalo, whose dreams of pop stardom have a decidedly political twist – the pin-up she moons over every morning is Nelson Mandela. She dreams of playing him in the school end-of-year production, supervised by Mary Masombuka (Whoopi Goldberg), a teacher determined to give her pupils a sense of identity in the face of daily repression. But when troops move in on the school to question pupils and staff about a classroom burning, Sarafina's painful politicization is not far off.

Whoopi Goldberg was a wise choice, her showbizzy style fitting in more self-effacingly than you might expect (and her accent's not bad either). Although her role is little more than a cameo with a tragic payoff, her dignified sar-

casm towards the Cape Town police sets the tone for Sarafina's own persistence. And Khumalo is extraordinary as the young heroine, making a convincing transition from naive vibrancy to hard-edged determination in the face of the torture she eventually suffers. Part history lesson, part spectacle, the film never quite pulls off the difficult balancing-act between rage and jubilation. But at the beginning, when its cast of kids dance *Fame*-style around a mock-up of the Hollywood Sign that reads SOWETO, you can't help but applaud the ambition. And it certainly has better music than any Hollywood movie you'll see this year.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

Romper Stomper

directed by **Geoffrey Wright**

This film is not for the squeamish – but then again neither is much of contemporary society. The plot is simple: to a defiantly multicultural suburb in Melbourne comes a neo-Nazi group committed to pursuing its aims (ridding the country of non-whites) with violence. Racism, the increasing gap between rich and poor, alienation and social isolation are recurring themes as the group of skinheads at the centre of the film see their world crumble about their ears. The violence which governs their lives is far from glamorized – the pain of each blow and the trauma of the aftermath is shown with repulsive accuracy. Yet **Romper Stomper** is unable to identify the roots of racism or even of the violence itself – and even suggests simplistically that the skins' errors stem from the failures of a dysfunctional family.

The anti-fascist message is driven home without any recourse to subtlety and, like its own soundtrack of disturbing noise and the vacuous lyrics of skinhead anti-music, clarity is anathema. And due to the restrictions of time and even the film form itself, the behaviour of Asians and skins alike tends to reinforce stereotypes.

Romper Stomper will challenge viewers by its apparent breaking of conventions, but as is all too often the case, the greater potential to clarify debate has been lost.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

music

Ragas and Sagas

by **Jan Garbarek, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan** and musicians from Pakistan (ECM)

Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek has tended to be associated with Nordic coolness because of his penchant for building improvizations around Scandinavian folk melodies. But he's also been an adventurous searcher in other areas, working in the past with Greek and Tunisian musicians, and with the famously eclectic Indian violinist Shankar. **Ragas and Sagas** finds him in the company of a group of classical musicians from Lahore, headed by singer Ustad Fateh Ali Khan (not to be confused with the well-known *qawwali* singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan) and his student Deepika Ththaal. The other instruments are tabla and the 39-stringed violin the sarangi, while also present on one track is drummer Manu Katche (known for his collaborations with Peter Gabriel), who puts a decidedly spacy and modernist twist into a music which often sounds austere and antique.

For all the austerity this is an immensely sensuous music, built up on rhythmic repetition that's nudged open by the vocal lines, alternately sinuous or rattling in staccato, and by Garbarek's nagging, edgy soprano. Garbarek features almost as a guest here, all the compositions except one being by Ali Khan; but it's very much in the sense of an honoured house guest given freedom to roam a very palatial family mansion. Three of the five tracks come in around the 13-minute mark, giving all the musicians a space for concentrated expansiveness. It's a record that works on all fronts – from musical invention through sensuousness to cultural dialogue.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

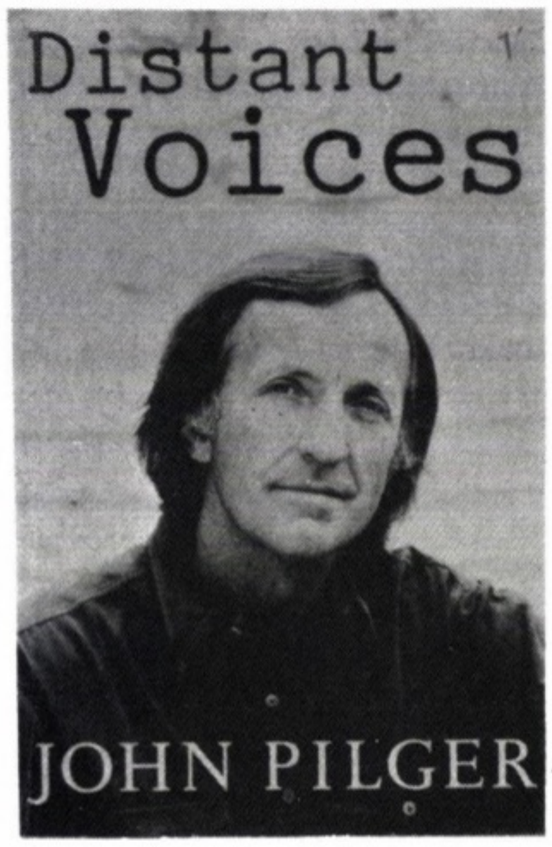
books

Distant Voices

by **John Pilger** (Vintage)

'They who put out the people's eyes reproach them of their blindness.' John Milton's words,

which Pilger quotes, remain true today. John Pilger sets himself to restore our sight, to help us see the inhuman crimes that governments commit in our name. His new book gathers together 46 of his articles, most from 1991 and 1992. He ranges all over the world: from an English coal mine to Florida's Disney World; from Cambodia (of course) via the Philippines to Iraq and the Gulf War.



The section on Cambodia is the most substantial and most heartfelt of the nine sections into which the book is divided. It tracks the way Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge have been lifted back into a dominant and threatening position in Cambodian politics with help from within the US State Department and the British Foreign Office – and Pilger will be making his full case in the April issue of the **NI**. The 12 articles under the heading *Mythmakers of the Gulf War* bring us face to face with horrors that the powers-that-be would prefer us not to know: how bulldozers buried Iraqi conscripts alive; how Iraqi children contracted disease from eating dirt; what a cluster bomb does to people.

The experts and the mainstream media have sought to normalize the unthinkable; to turn our faces away from the horrors of war. Pilger is one of those who help us to hold on to our consciences, our sense of humanity. Even if you have read some of these articles already they deserve reading again – and to be given pride of place on your bookshelves.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: **Chris Brazier**

THE *classic*

Mythologies

... being the book that turned nature into history.

MYTHOLOGIES is a series of essays, written in the mid-1950s, about typical Western consumerist habits and pastimes. Their apparent triviality is signalled both by their titles *(Soap Powders and Detergents, Operation Margarine, Toys, Steak and Chips, Plastic)* and their brevity. But the odd seriousness with which their author, Roland Barthes, treats such commercial detritus, and the stylishness with which he does so, together suggest that something of considerable cultural importance is happening. And so it is.

A single example will show that these essays are anything but self-indulgent investigations of the negligible. In a piece called *Wine and Milk* Barthes catalogues the reasons for the seemingly 'natural' French passion for wine. Essentially this means uncovering the ways in which wine exists as a symbol as much as a substance. In one paragraph he refers to wine as a 'resilient totem', a 'galvanic', 'converting' and 'alchemical' substance with a 'philosophical power'. Such symbolic status derives from wine's capacity to change and reverse consciousness and behaviour. From this arises a national 'mythology' of wine to which every French person is expected to subscribe – if you don't confess to such belief in wine you risk being labelled dangerously deviant.

This national euphoria over wine, Barthes points out, is so habitual that it now seems 'natural', and its economic basis is deliberately and outrageously ignored: 'its production is deeply involved in French capitalism, whether it is that of the private distillers or that of the big settlers in Algeria who impose on the Muslims, on the very land of which they have been dispossessed, a crop of which they have no need, while they lack even bread'. Barthes thus devastatingly links the seemingly innocent everyday pleasures of French life with the barbarities of imperial conquest. His intention is to show how the 'mythology' works, as a means of shattering it: 'wine cannot be an unalloyedly blissful substance, except if we wrongfully forget that it is also the product of an expropriation'.

All of the essays, in one way or another, show how Western consumption is regulated by a mass culture (the media, advertising, education) which produces certain 'mythologies'. Mythology is deeply bound up with forgetfulness. The mythologizing of daily life invites us to forget or ignore the economic basis of all consumption, investing commodities with a symbolic 'naturalness'. 'I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn,' Barthes explains in his preface, 'and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there'.

Barthes identified this process of creating 'naturalness' for the masses as one in which a 'bourgeois' version of experience was offered as universal, and the use of this word indicates his close relationship, at this time, with the Marxist tradition. But **Mythologies** has no truck with mechanical Marxist notions of 'false consciousness', which see 'the truth' as being systematically withheld from the working population by the propaganda of a ruling class. In the long theoretical essay with which Barthes concludes the book *(Myth Today)* it is clear that there is no 'reality' separate from the ways in which social life is represented. Our 'real' lives are inextricably bound up with the ways in which we represent ourselves and interpret others' representations (in films, in news, in magazines, and so on). The difference, for example, between *New Internationalist* and *The Economist*, is not that one is 'true' and the other 'false'. Both are ideological, but each represents social life in fundamentally different ways. We favour one or the other because we see in it the prospect of our individual or collective interests being advanced.

Why is this important? Well, traditional Marxism's only answer to 'false consciousness' was political insurrection by a revolutionary minority which would then establish 'the truth' of communism. This alternative vision of the political potential of the vast majority of people in any society is arguably as impoverished as that which it replaces. In both cases popular consciousness is deliberately managed by a small élite which is confident of its own absolute authority. That we now see the simple-mindedness (never mind the danger) of this position is partly due to the work of Roland Barthes. For if our consciousness is formed through our representations, it can also be transformed by them. Such 'intellectual' transformations have to be struggled for every bit as much as 'economic' ones: the two can't be separated, and indeed often depend on each other.

But, after all, I can only be telling you this to remind you of it. For you already believe it. If you didn't, why would you be reading this magazine? ■

Macdonald Daly

***Mythologies** by Roland Barthes (1957), is published in English by Paladin.*

QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you appear in this, your section, and are answered by other readers. **Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.**

JON DANZIG

How did the wretched term (economic) 'basket case' come about? Who used it first and in reference to which country?

● I first came across the term 'basket case' in the context of an old-fashioned hospital for people with mental handicaps. It was used as derogatory term by staff to refer to those patients who were confined to wickerwork cribs – hence 'baskets' – and were unable to do anything for themselves.

As far as I am aware it was first used in relation to a country by Henry Kissinger, while he was US Secretary of State. He was referring to Bangladesh at a time when the country was seeking international aid for famine relief.

Peter Hoad,
Glasgow,Scotland

● North American soldiers who were killed and dismembered in battle were sent home for burial in large wicker baskets. These corpses were called 'basket cases'.

Mark Pinder
Vancouver, Canada

Where does the term 'Dutch Courage' come from?

● In addition to the reply in **NI 235**, I had always assumed that the term was first used in 1665 during the English Great Plague when the dead were taken to places outside London for burial. Since most local people were reluctant to carry out this unpleasant task the Dutch stepped in and did it, thereby risking infection themselves.

Edna Howard
Gwynedd, Cymru, UK

Can anyone tell me more about a waterless toilet – invented by a Swede – which produces high-grade compost?

● It is called a Multrum and consists of a composting chamber with sloping floor situated immediately below a squatting plate. Grass, straw, ash, sawdust and easily biodegradable household refuse are also added. The composting material slowly moves down the chamber and into a humus vault from which it must be regularly removed. Conscientious user care is needed – especially in tropical regions where excreta-related diseases thrive. More information can be found in *Sanitation without water* by Uno Winblad and Wen Kilaama (Macmillan, London), obtainable via TALC, PO Box 49, St Albans, AL1 4AX, UK.

JW Rosenboom
Tropical Health Engineer, San Diego, US

QUESTIONS awaiting your answers:

What makes a person ambidextrous? What percentage of the world's population is ambidextrous? Is there any research on this subject or any club or association for such people? I am ambidextrous and am very keen to make contact with others!

H Ibrahim
15 Taman Perak, 10150 Penang, Malaysia

I understand that 60 per cent of crops grown in Third World countries is purchased by industrialized nations to be used mainly as animal fodder. By eating animals reared on these crops am I helping the Third World to get foreign currency and break out of its debt trap or should I refrain from meat-eating in the hope that crops will be redirected to the mouths of the poor?

Andrew Walker
Glenrother, Scotland

Is it true that the UK is still paying for the First World War and to whom?

Elizabeth Atkinson,
Hastings, Aotearoa (NZ)

Any ideas about what we should call different parts of the old USSR? Do categories like 'East' and 'West' make sense any more? And what about 'North' and 'South'? And what about 'South America' and 'Latin America', for that matter? Which is more politically correct?

Tracy Lean,
Rainbow Centre, Nottingham

If you have any questions or answers please send them to Curiosities, **New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK**, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover).

Cambodia's been done

Ten million land mines still in place, the Khmer Rouge armed to the teeth, increasing their territory – and the UN calls it a 'peace process'? To ***Paul Davies*** *in Cambodia it looks more like an international conspiracy to make the country's war a non-story.*

RECENTLY a talented photographer friend spent much time and energy trying to sell some of his work on Cambodia. Virtually all the papers and magazines he approached told him: 'Sorry, Cambodia has been done'. No one took his work.

I presume they meant that after 20 years of war, genocide, invasion and starvation, there is peace at last. The basis for their optimism: the signing of the Peace Accords in Paris on October 1991 under the auspices of the United Nations.

But there is a different story that needs to be told. In the year since the peace was signed more land mines have been laid in Cambodia than taken out, and there has been as much armed conflict as during any of the war years of the 1980s.

HOWARD DAVIES / OXFAM

So why all this myth-making – by the UN and others? Cambodia has no oil; it is of little strategic importance. Perhaps the answer is that most of Cambodia's ills have their roots in foreign interference over decades, centuries even.

The international community wants a solution and it's pinning its hopes on the election of an acceptable new Cambodian government in May 1993. Thereafter the UN can politically wash its hands of the subject and leave Cambodians to work out their own destinies.

Therein lies the danger – and the cynicism. The host of ugly legacies left by the foreign intervention of the past few years is being ignored. The most obvious of these is the now UN-recognized, reconstructed Khmer Rouge organization. Responsible for the deaths of nearly one million Cambodian civilians from 1975 to 1979, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge is now part of the peace process. The gamble of the Paris Accord was that peace with this organization was possible – leaving aside the whole issue of whether it was desirable. It is now plain that the gamble has failed. And Cambodians will be the losers.

Already the Khmer Rouge have committed around 15 major breaches of the Peace Accord. In Spring 1992 they broke the ceasefire by launching a major attack in the province of Kompong Thom which produced thousands of refugees. More recently they blew up two key bridges on National Route 6, cutting off two major provinces. The upshot is the Khmer Rouge now control twice as much of Cambodia as they did this time last year.

Furthermore they have broken the Paris Accord by refusing to demobilize their troops or to give information about land mines they have planted. Nor have they co-operated with the UN's Transitional Authority in Cambodia or allowed the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to work effectively in Khmer Rouge zones. Peace keepers, human-rights monitors, civil administrators and electoral officials have come across similar obstacles. Clearly Pol Pot is not playing the game.

In response the UN has passed a series of increasingly stiffly-worded resolutions. But it continues to pour billions of dollars into this peace process – maintaining that for any settlement to be comprehensive the Khmer Rouge must be inside the deal. And for the time being the Khmer Rouge are giving just a little here and there. The real danger lies in what they will do when the UN and its 15,000 peace keepers leave the country three months after the elections.

There are, of course, more Cambodian players involved in the peace process than just the Khmer Rouge and the state of Cambodia. Since 1982 the West has supported the Non-Communist Resistance (NCR) which includes supporters of the former ruler Prince Sihanouk. The Resistance is actually dominated by the Khmer Rouge – but the West has preferred to ignore this. The West has also preferred to overlook the fact that the Khmer Rouge have been using UN refugee camps along the Thai border as bases.

Throughout the 1980s Western aid kept the NCR artificially strong. Since the UN's peace process started nothing seems to have changed. Roads funded by the UN to help with refugee resettlement have been extended to the Thai border enabling the Khmer Rouge, now the richest guerilla group in the world, to pursue a lucrative trade in gems and timber concessions. UN requests that the border be closed or controlled are ignored.

But perhaps the most disgraceful myth of this 'UN time', as Cambodians refer to it, surrounds the issue of land mines. Cambodia now has the highest incidence of land-mine amputees of any country in the world. There are between 300 and 700 amputations every month, and one in every 236 Cambodians has lost a limb as a result of land mines They are not only a human tragedy. In agricultural provinces such as Battambang land-mines render vast tracts of farm land, irrigation works, roads and villages unviable. In several areas they are the largest single cause of impoverishment, the largest single impediment to the re-development process. And yet in Battambang province, one year after the Peace Accord, not one single mine had been removed by the UN. The contrast between the energy with which de-mining was conducted in Kuwait and what is being (or not being) done in Cambodia, could not be sharper.

Meanwhile, half the refugees in the UNHCR camp of Khao-I-Dang have refused to register for repatriation because they believe there is no true peace or security in Cambodia and they fear persecution by the Khmer Rouge. The UNHCR is planning to counsel such people. They and the entire UN operation in Cambodia would do better to listen to these voices and take on board some simple truths. But with so many millions invested, nobody seems prepared for an honest reappraisal of the situation. ■

Paul Davies is a relief worker based in Battambang, Cambodia.The **NI**'s April issue will investigate the Cambodia situation in depth.

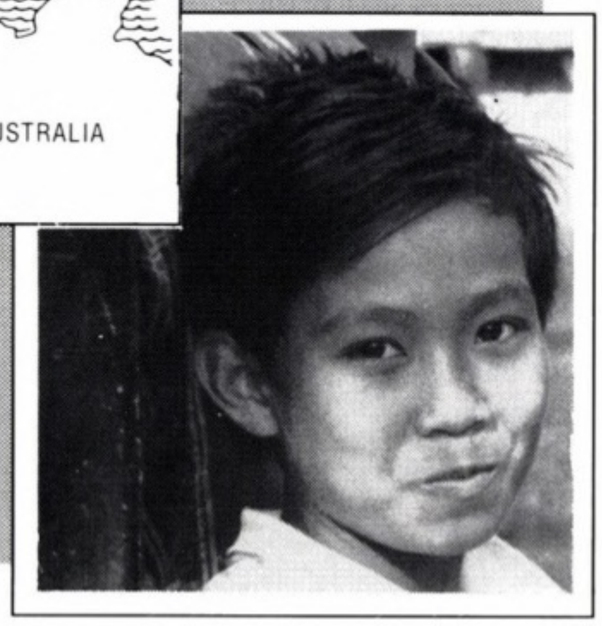
Indonesia

THE film *The Year of Living Dangerously* captured the events that led to the 1965 toppling of Indonesia's left-leaning President Sukarno and his replacement by the iron-fisted army general, Suharto.

Indonesia has had only these two presidents since Independence. Sukarno withdrew from the United Nations and told the US 'To hell with your aid!' He also skirmished with the British in trying to prevent the north Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak from joining Malaysia.

After his overthrow in 1965 the Communist Party was destroyed. As many as half a million people are thought to have died in the frenzy of killing that engulfed Java in the months following the coup.

The rise of an obscure general, Suharto, who happened to command a key army unit, ushered in the 'New Order' government which has been in power ever since. He is credited for implementing sensible economic policies, but criticised for his opulent lifestyle, clique of favoured business men and brutal treatment of opponents – as in Irian Jaya, Aceh, and East Timor where soldiers killed unarmed mourners at a cemetery in Dili in 1991.



DEXTER TIRANTI

The country's origins as a nation state lie in the Dutch East India Company's efforts to secure a monopoly in the spice trade and the subsequent 350 years of Dutch colonial rule. Indonesia's size and diversity are such that until recently inhabitants had no sense of belonging to one country.

But since Independence in 1949, national identity has been fostered. The state ideology 'Pancasila' (Five Principles) is vigorously promoted: belief in God, 'guided democracy', nationalism, justice and humanity – the last two ringing an ironic note in the light of the country's poor record on human rights.

Indonesia is reckoned to have good prospects – by International Monetary Fund standards that is. Levels of exports and income are rising. Other challenges lie ahead, including the smooth transition of power to Suharto's successor. Recent elections reinstalled the incumbent Golkar party, but it is hard to tell whether 70 year-old Suharto will be re-elected this year.

Another question mark hangs over how the country will act as custodian of the world's second largest tropical forest (after the Amazon). The State will have to walk the tightrope between people's need for land and cash and the conservation of natural resources.

Indonesia is a beautiful country with native animals such as the orang-utan and Javan rhinoceros. Some forests have more than 3,000 tree species (the UK has 40). Borneo has twice the plant species of all of Africa.

The world's fifth most populous nation, rich in resources and well as in its people, may soon play a wider role in world affairs – even if it continues to live dangerously at home.

S Carr

AT A glance

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★

POLITICS
Military dominates; elections give legitimacy to ruling party.
LEFT RIGHT
1981

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
Economy dominated by Chinese and Suharto's family.
1981: ★★

LITERACY ★★★
62% women; 84% men. School attendance lower than official claims.
1981: ★★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★
Reduced need for aid; oil, gas and timber all in demand.
1981: ★★

FREEDOM ★★
Political prisoners remain from the 1965 coup. Media shackled by government.
1981: ★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
Women have the vote and are less disadvantaged than in other Muslim countries.
1981: ★★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★
63 years *(US 76 years)*. Progress in health care.
1981: ★★

Leader President (ex-General) Suharto
Economy GNP per capita US $500 *(US $20,910)*
Main exports: Oil, gas, hardwood, plywood, textiles, palm oil, coffee and minerals such as coal, copper, tin, gold, bauxite, and magnesium.
Main imports: Machinery, electrical equipment, chemicals, food.
People 184 million
Health Infant mortality 71 per 1,000 live births *(US 9 per 1,000)*
Culture Previous colonizers: pre-1816 Portuguese, Dutch and British. 1816-1942 Dutch; 1942-45 occupied by Japanese. The people are mainly Malayo-Polynesians (originally from South China), and Melanesians. There are over 300 distinct groups, each with their own language. Chinese descendants of coolie labourers brought in by the Dutch make up 3 per cent of the population and control 75 per cent of the private domestic capital.
Languages: Bahasa Indonesia is official language.
Religion: Muslim 85 per cent; Christian 10 per cent; some Hindus and Buddhists.

Sources: *The State of World Population 1992; The State of the World's Children 1992 and information supplied by the author.*

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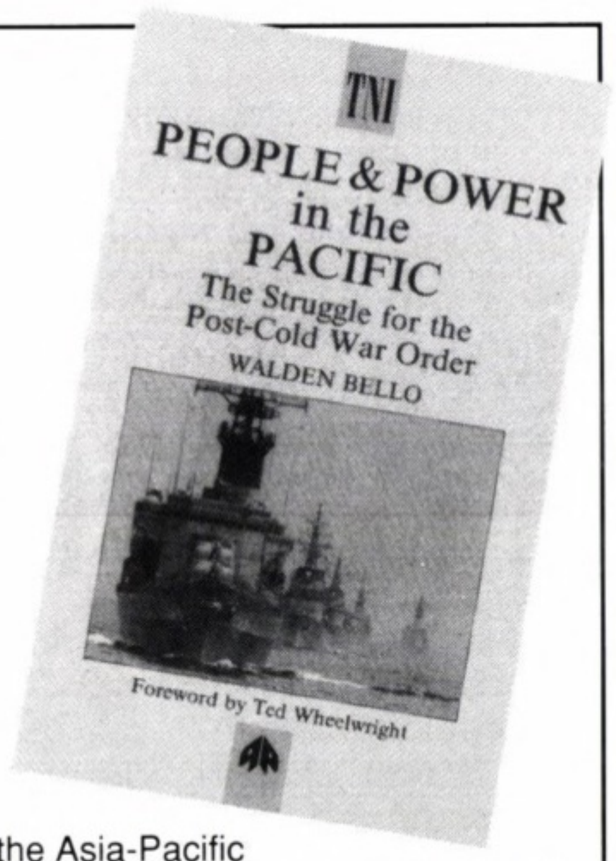

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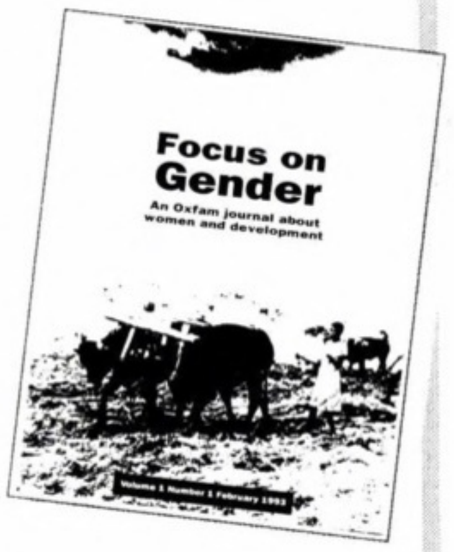

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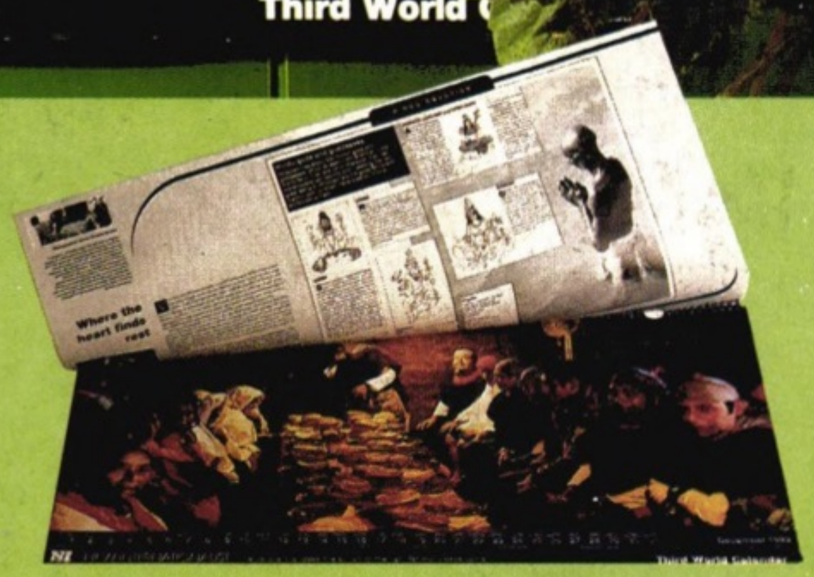

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